

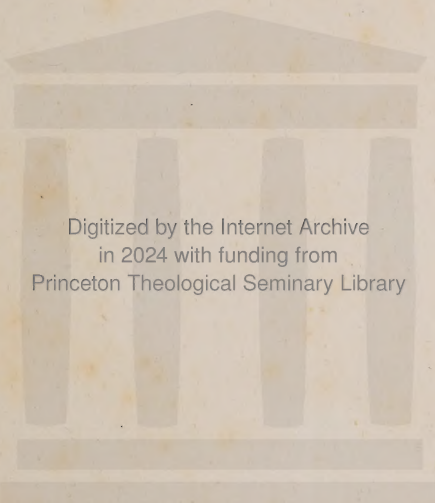
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The death of the righteous



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THE
DEATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS;
OR,
THE WAY OF HOLY DYING.

BY M. DE LA PLACETTE.

Translated from the French

BY LEWIS P. BAYARD, A. M.

RECTOR OF ST. CLEMENT'S CHURCH, NEW-YORK.

Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.—*Numb. xxiii. 10.*

Happy is he who is engaged in controversy with his own passions, and comes off superior; who makes it his endeavor that his follies and weaknesses may die before him, and who daily meditates on mortality and immortality.—*Jortin's Preface to his Remarks on Ecclesiastical History*, p. 34.

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TO

MRS. MARY GOODEN HOBART,

RELICT OF THE

RT. REV. JOHN HENRY HOBART, D. D.

Late Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of New-York.

DEAR MADAM,

It will not, at least by you, be esteemed an unmeaning ceremony, if I dedicate this little volume to one who best knew the value and has most deeply felt the loss of that lamented Prelate, whose talents and virtues so signally adorned the Church over which he presided, and whose devoted labors for the promotion of Christian knowledge and piety, and for the interests of primitive truth and order, ceased only with his life.

An afflicted Church has sympathized with you, and they who enjoyed the nearest privileges of his friendship and confidence, have given you assurances that they can never cease to lament their severe and irreparable loss. As one among these—

as one to whom in a thousand kind and delicate attentions, this confidence was evinced,—permit me in this public manner to testify my grateful remembrance to you, whose memory will recal not a few of those moments when, in the sacred family circle, the unrestrained feelings of warm affection went forth to animate and cheer the domestic scene, and that love which is the fulfilling of the law, shed its mild lustre around the character of him, who in his official station inculcated its obligations, and in his unwearied consecration of himself to the glory of God and the good of men, illustrated its divine influences.

The following pages treat of a subject not recommended by the charm of novelty, but doubtless one which to you, now more than ever, is invested with deep and hallowed interest. It is one that for many years I have endeavored to entertain in my retirements for devotion as no unwelcome guest. Ever familiar to my mind, never has it been so much the companion of my thoughts, as since the loss of my spiritual father, my counsellor, my most honored, dear and most lamented friend.

Among the various works I have seen upon this subject, I have met with none which treats it in a more plain, practical, or satisfactory manner. I offer

it to your acceptance, with the humble prayer that God would long and favorably extend your valuable life to your beloved family and friends; and that the perusal of this little volume may contribute, in some small degree at least, to those edifying reflections and holy consolations, which this solemn subject is so well calculated to inspire.

With great respect, I remain,

Dear Madam,

Your obedient Servant,

LEWIS PINTARD BAYARD.

New - York, September 13, 1832.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THE subject of death, as it first strikes the human mind, carries with it something terrifying to the fears, unwelcome to the hopes, and revolting to the minds of those who make the present uncertain state, with all its sorrows and its separations, the object of their idolatrous attachment. It is not so much the blow which severs the frail thread of life that excites their apprehension. It is the uncertainty concerning their future and untried state of existence.

“ Distrust and darkness of a future state,
Is that which makes mankind to dread their fate ;
Dying is nothing ; but 't is this we fear,
To be we know not what, we know not where.”

It is only by the power of Christian faith that an antidote can be provided against these terrors, and that the glooms which to the eye of unaided reason rest upon the grave, can be effectually dissipated. The Christian departing from this world is assured by the Gospel of CHRIST that he is leaving a barren and dry wilderness where no water is, for the blissful

abodes of an undecaying happiness, where from the fountain of celestial comfort he shall be enabled to satisfy the most enlarged desires of the soul. To such in death there may be no greater exemption from bodily suffering, and in some instances even not so great as may be realized by the wicked. The victorious energy of faith it is which gives the Christian his peace in death. By faith he is contented to leave a tabernacle frail and perishable for a better habitation—a "*house not made with hands eternal in the heavens.*" But "*all men have not faith;*" and it is for this reason that they both fear to die, and are so negligent in their preparation for the great eventful change.

To instruct men how to die the death of the righteous, is the object of the following volume, and this most important of all sciences is only to be learned by those directions which teach men how to live. Such is the method used by the pious author whose valuable treatise on this subject it is believed now first appears before the public in an English form. The translator has omitted the last chapter, which treats of the duties of those who, by a violent death, expiate the laws of their country, under an impression that it would unnecessarily increase the size of a volume which is designed for an easy

manual, and that the preparation for death which is considered in the preceding books may be applied with sufficient advantage to all sorts and conditions of men. This is the principal alteration which has been made; and this, with occasional variations of phraseology, the only material change which this volume has undergone in its translation. It is now submitted to the public with the hope that it may do good to the souls of men; preparing them by a good life for a peaceful death and a blissful eternity. And if only one ransomed spirit in the future world of glory shall testify that so great a benefit has been derived from its perusal, the translator will consider such an event as an abundant recompense for the effort he has made to prepare it for the press.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

I HAVE no doubt the same occasion to fear for this work what I apprehended in regard to my "*Devout Communion*."

The approbation bestowed on Mr. Drelincourt's "*Consolations*," and the number of editions through which that work has passed, might give some ground for the persuasion that nothing new or important could be added to that which has been so well said by this excellent servant of God. But a little reflection, perhaps, will convince the reader who takes the trouble to examine this book, that however excellent the work of Mr. Drelincourt undoubtedly is of its kind, something like the present performance was not the less needed. Mr. Drelincourt, in his work, has not pretended to show all the preparations which are necessary to a good death.

Among the dispositions requisite to a good death, he has considered only one, which however important, is neither the most necessary nor the most efficacious; I mean that fortitude which arms the soul of the believer against the terrors of death, and which enables it to contemplate this last moment without fearing it. Now who but observes that this disposition, however desirable, is neither sufficient

nor necessary. It is not sufficient. For we daily see those who dread neither death nor its consequences, and who die in this miserable insensibility. They have no other faith than that described in Scripture as a temporary faith. Though such may profess to be renewed in the spirit of their minds, they entirely want that which is its most important requisite. Notwithstanding, as they doubt not that their faith is a justifying faith, the faith of the elect of God, that the renewal of their minds is effectual, and that they have truly become the children of God, and heirs of his heavenly kingdom, they regard death without terror, and assure themselves that their death in particular will be infallibly succeeded by all the glory and blessedness of the life to come. Thus they have no apprehensions. Nevertheless they die in a state exceedingly bad. For how can it be possible to die well without a living faith, and a true justification. This disposition, therefore, is not sufficient. I add that it is not absolutely necessary.

Let us suppose a child of God truly converted from sin to holiness, but who doubts the sincerity of his conversion, a case which often occurs, and of which we have many examples. This uncertainty, with regard to his present condition, allows him not to consider death but with terror. For how can it be possible not to be filled with apprehension when he is not certain whether he should regard death as the entrance of hell, or as the gate of heaven. This believer then will tremble, and nevertheless be saved, and consequently die well; for as we shall see in

the sequel, an assurance of salvation, and a good death, are two advantages so strictly united the one with the other, that they cannot be separated. It is certain then that the disposition opposed to the terrors which Mr. Drelincourt undertakes to allay by his "Consolations" is neither sufficient nor necessary, and that it is equally possible to die well without it, and badly with it, which cannot be said of some others, as will be seen in the course of this work.

It was thus proper to undertake a treatise which should comprise all, and which without being limited to a single disposition should point out all those absolutely necessary or simply useful, on an occasion so important as that which relates to our laboring for eternity.

This is what I have endeavored to do in the present work, where I have sought to omit nothing which might most effectually give to my readers those helps which they had a right to expect of me. To omit nothing, I have divided this little work into five* books. In the first, I have attempted to show the dispositions and reflections most necessary for dying well, in order that every person comprehending distinctly what a good death is, may see the object which should engage his exertions. In the following, I have considered what should be done in order to obtain these dispositions, and awaken these sentiments. And as there are three several condi-

* For the omission of the fifth, see the Translator's preface.

tions in which we are to labor, in health, in the incipient stages of sickness, and at the approach of death, I have shown the care we should take in these respective states, which is the subject which occupies the second, third, and fourth books. The fifth contains directions for those who die a violent death. I have not drawn out the reflections which might guard us against the mere terrors of death. I have two reasons in particular for this. The first is, that Mr. Drelincourt has done this in a manner which leaves nothing to be added. The other is, that it did not seem to me very necessary.

In fact, if we fear death, this fear must arise from one of two causes: either that we suppose death to be a very great evil even to the true children of God, or that though assured of its advantage to such, each fears this advantage is not for him, because in fact he fears he is not of the number. I never met with a person whose apprehensions arose from the first of these causes. All who have appeared to be in terror of death, have assured me their fears arose solely from this consideration, that they dared not assure themselves that their faith was a living faith, and the renewal of their minds a true renewal. It is not therefore very necessary to expose the error of the first of these opinions, of which we have few or no examples. The second deserves much more consideration; but as I have said in my treatise on "*Conscience*" what I think of this subject, it is unnecessary to extend my remarks on the present occasion. I have therefore briefly considered what

appeared to me most necessary. This recalls to my memory one thing which I have observed, and for which I consider a reason due to my readers. I have necessarily been obliged to treat of many things in this volume, of which I have spoken in other works. As repetitions are always troublesome and disagreeable, I was a little at a loss how to accommodate this difficulty. At first I thought of touching no subject which I had elsewhere considered, and content myself by sending my reader to these other works. But I soon perceived that this would be extremely inconvenient. Doubtless it would be necessary so to do in a doctrinal treatise ; but in a manual like this, it is unnecessary. For it is very possible that this book may fall into the hands of those who have not read the others, and could not even procure them. And they who might have them would not be satisfied with the interruption which this reference would occasion. I have therefore thought it better to make this work a complete treatise, and thus to avoid the necessity of a supplement. With this view I have found it useful to repeat many things which I have elsewhere said, and more or less to extend them, as the plan of the work has required. I have added some meditations, and a number of prayers, some shorter and others longer, as the subject preceding them furnished occasion.

On the whole, I have endeavored to say those things which were useful, rather than those which were lofty or learned. I have sought to edify the

pious soul. It is for my readers to judge what has been my success.

My chief desire is, that this little work may be of some utility, and that it may please God to attend it with his grace, and shed upon it his blessing.

TABLE OF CHAPTERS.

BOOK I.

CHAP. I. THAT nothing is more rare than a good death — The cause of this — Plan of the work, - - -	Page 3
CHAP. II. Two kinds of death — By what they are distinguished, - - - - -	7
CHAP. III. There are two states in which we may die, a state of sin and a state of grace, - - - - -	11
CHAP. IV. Death should find us really employed in our duty, - - - - -	16
CHAP. V. To die well we should repent of our sins, -	21
CHAP. VI. Faith is necessary to a good death, - - -	27
CHAP. VII. The hope of a blessed immortality is neces- sary to a dying person, - - - - -	33
CHAP. VIII. A dying person should love GOD and his neighbor, - - - - -	41
CHAP. IX. To die well we should be entirely submissive to the will of GOD, - - - - -	46
CHAP. X. The causes of our repugnance to death, - -	53
CHAP. XI. Last cause of our repugnance to death - -	59
CHAP. XII. Spiritual joy is suitable to a dying person,	67
CHAP. XIII. Last disposition, humility, - - - - -	72
CHAP. XIV. That a good death is much more rare than is generally imagined, - - - - -	76

BOOK II.

CHAP. I.	That nothing so much concerns us as our eternal salvation, - - - - -	Page 85
CHAP. II.	That salvation depends upon the manner in which we die — A prayer, - - - - -	96
CHAP. III.	That we should neglect nothing which may enable us to die in a holy and Christian manner — A prayer, - - - - -	102
CHAP. IV.	That we should in season commence the preparation for death — Meditation, - - - - -	108
CHAP. V.	To die well, we should without delay implore of GOD the favor of a happy death — A prayer, - - -	120
CHAP. VI.	A good life is a necessary preparation for a happy death — A prayer, - - - - -	126
CHAP. VII.	To die well, we must begin early to detach our affections from earth — Meditation, - - - - -	132
CHAP. VIII.	To die well we should early arrange our temporal affairs, - - - - -	142
CHAP. IX.	We should often think of death — A prayer, - - -	146
CHAP. X.	What should be our reflections when we think of death — A prayer, - - - - -	155
CHAP. XI.	We should think of the judgment which is to follow death, - - - - -	167
CHAP. XII.	We should often think of the blessedness and glory of the life to come — A prayer, - - - - -	178
CHAP. XIII.	We should often think of hell — A prayer, - - -	188

BOOK III.

What we should do in sickness in order to die in a holy and Christian manner, - - - - -	203
---	-----

CHAP. I. First reflection which a sick person should make upon his affliction, that it is the will of GOD — A prayer, - - - - -	Page 205
CHAP. II. Second reflection, possibly it is a punishment for some sin — A prayer, - - - - -	215
CHAP. III. Third reflection, it is possible GOD has designed our sickness to detach us from earth, - - -	227
CHAP. IV. Fourth reflection, it is very possible that GOD has deprived us of our health because we make a bad use of it — A prayer, - - - - -	232
CHAP. V. Some other reflections which we should make in sickness, - - - - -	239
CHAP. VI. Reply to an objection, whether it is proper that a sick person should desire and pray to GOD, and use every means of recovery, - - - - -	247
CHAP. VII. Of remedies and other care which should be taken for recovery, - - - - -	253
CHAP. VIII. Last reflection, the sickness by which we are attacked may be mortal, or may become so, - - -	265

BOOK IV.

CHAP. I. First duty of a man who would prepare himself for death; he should send for a minister of GOD — A prayer, - - - - -	275
CHAP. II. He should assure himself whether he has made his peace with GOD, or whether he has yet to labor for this all-important work, - - - - -	283
CHAP. III. Duties of a Christian, who upon strict examination, hopes he has reason to believe himself one of GOD'S reconciled children — A prayer, - - - - -	291
CHAP. IV. Second order of duties — Meditation, - - -	300

XX TABLE OF CHAPTERS.

CHAP. V.	Third order of duties — A prayer, - -	Page 314
CHAP. VI.	What should be the duty of those who after careful examination are unable to assure themselves of their true state, and are doubtful whether they have made their peace with GOD — Meditation, - - - -	323
CHAP. VII.	What is to be done by him who supposes either that he is or may be in a state of sin and condemnation — He should first be persuaded of the truths of religion — A prayer, - - - - -	328
CHAP. VIII.	Two truths in particular which should not be doubted by the sinner who labors under the influence of an evil conscience — Meditation upon the mercy of GOD, - - - - -	335
CHAP. IX.	That the sinner convinced of his dangerous state, should neglect nothing which might contribute to his conversion — A prayer, - - - - -	353
CHAP. X.	What a dying man should do for his conversion — A prayer, - - - - -	361
CHAP. XI.	What should be the repentance of a dying man, - - - - -	372
CHAP. XII.	How we should be employed after doing all that has been directed in the preceding chapters — A prayer, - - - - -	380
CHAP. XIII.	That the dying should excite themselves to love GOD with a love of interest — A prayer, - - -	386
CHAP. XIV.	The dying should love GOD with a love of gratitude, - - - - -	395
CHAP. XV.	That they should think intently upon CHRIST crucified, - - - - -	402

THE
DEATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS:
OR
THE WAY OF HOLY DYING.

BOOK I.

WHERE IT IS CONSIDERED WHAT PROPERLY DESERVES
THE NAME OF A GOOD DEATH.

How shocking must thy summons be, O Death!
To him that is at ease in his possessions:
Who, counting on long years of pleasure here,
Is quite unfurnish'd for the world to come!
In that dread moment how the frantic soul
Raves round the walls of her clay tenement;
Runs to each avenue and shrieks for help;
But shrieks in vain! How wishfully she looks
On all she's leaving, now no longer hers.
A little longer; yet a little longer!
O might she stay to wash away her stains,
And fit her for her passage! — *Blair.*

THE
DEATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

CHAPTER I.

THAT NOTHING IS MORE RARE THAN A GOOD DEATH. — THE
CAUSE OF THIS. — PLAN OF THE WORK.

NOTHING is more common than death — nothing more rare than to die well. The first of these truths is incontestible, and we shall not doubt the second if we consider, that as salvation is a necessary and inseparable consequence of a good death ; so if the greater part of men died the death of the righteous, the greater part would obtain salvation. But far from this ; we know the number of those who are saved, bears no proportion to that of those who perish ; since we are assured there are but “*few who enter in at the strait gate,*” and that the multitude are to be found at the “*wide gate,*” and in the “*broad road*” of destruction.

We should, therefore, admit that a good death is unusual, and that the greater part of mankind

die as they have lived, immersed in their sins, without any true and inward communion with JESUS CHRIST, satisfied with a mere profession of the truth, and denying the power of it by their actions and in their most secret thoughts. How happens this? It would without doubt be easy to assign several reasons, but I am much deceived if the two following are not the principal: — one is, that few know what it is to die well: the other is, that fewer still who know, take any pains to “practise what they know.”

The generality of men form an extremely false, or at least an extremely vague and general idea of a good death. They make it to consist in things which are common to those who die well, and to a far greater number of those who die miserably. They imagine that to die well is to have a pastor by whom their minds may be occasionally engaged in the consideration of divine things; to follow in thought the train of his conversation; to address the throne of grace in prayer, with a desire strong or feeble, that GOD will hear it; to ask the pardon of sins committed, joining to this prayer some sorrow for sin, and assuring themselves of success in the name and by the merit of JESUS CHRIST. Such is the idea which many have of a good death: but it is evident that this is a very imperfect idea of it, since

if it were just, nothing would be more ordinary than to die well, there being nothing more common than persons who die in a manner like this. In the meantime, as they imagine there is nothing necessary beside this to a good death, they make no effort to do any thing more. They are satisfied with what they consider sufficient; they are deceived in so considering it, and their error is fatal. I know there are those who, better instructed, conceive more distinctly what it is to die well, and who know what are the dispositions requisite for a departure in the love and favor of God. But among the number of these how many are there who do not what they ought, to acquire these dispositions, and bring themselves into this happy state. How many who neglect themselves in this and in many other respects, and who, notwithstanding all their light and their knowledge, live and die in their sins? These are then the most culpable; for "*the servant who knew his LORD's will and did it not, shall be beaten with more stripes*" than he who sinned through ignorance.

Three things are necessary to a good death.

I. To understand what it is to die well; to know all the duties of a dying person; all he should do; all he should think, and feel.

II. To be instructed in what way he may attain to these acts, thoughts and dispositions.

III. To practise them.

The following pages will be devoted to a consideration of the first two of these heads. The work will be divided into two parts. The first will teach what a good death is, and will discover what is best calculated to make it so. The second will show what must be done to put us in a proper state to die, and to acquire the dispositions necessary to a dying person. I shall undertake to illustrate the first of these points in the first book, and the second in the following. In respect to the third, which is the practice and observance of what is here recommended, it will be evident to the reader that this is his own concern. This depends solely upon the grace and operation of the Holy Spirit, who only can give efficacy to the truths here proposed.

All that I can do in this respect, is to pray the Supreme Master of hearts, "*the author of every good and perfect gift,*" to impress deeply in the hearts of my hearers, the truths which I undertake to illustrate in this work, and to make them conduce to his own glory, and the salvation of the souls of men. And this I beseech him to do of his mercy and goodness, through our Lord JESUS CHRIST.

CHAPTER II.

TWO KINDS OF DEATH. — BY WHAT THEY ARE DISTINGUISHED.

To judge of death only by the light of nature, we shall find that it is nearly the same in all men. We shall find in it some minute diversities, which arise from various unimportant circumstances. But we shall observe that it is always the same thing in the end. It is always the extinction of life, the separation of body and soul, the overthrow and destruction of "*this earthly tabernacle*," where now we have our habitation. So that in this respect those words are true and applicable which declare — "*There is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not.*"

To the eye of faith, however, a great diversity is to be remarked in this death, which appears thus similar and uniform. We shall see there are two very different descriptions; or more properly to speak, two kinds, diametrically opposed to each other. In the one, we are objects of the love of God; in the other of his hatred. The one is followed by infinite and eternal felicity; the other with extreme and everlasting misery. That

which precedes these two descriptions of death is not less opposite than that which attends and follows them. Three things conduce to this; the state of those who die in this different way, the manner in which they are occupied, and the sense of approaching death which is realized by the soul.

When the children of God come to die, death always finds them in that happy state which is called a state of grace. The wicked, on the contrary, die in a state of sin and condemnation. The children of God were actually engaged in their duty; they labored to serve God and to be saved, until death came to take them from the earth. The wicked, on the contrary, had other cares more or less criminal, but equally vain and useless. Finally, the approach of death excites faith, repentance, the love of God, and similar acts of a sincere piety in the soul of the true believer. With the others there are no such indications, but on the contrary dispositions at utter variance with them.

It may here be useful to remark that the third variety above mentioned, namely, the sense of approaching death realized by the soul, is not uniform. It does not apply to those who know with certainty they are dying, or that they are about to die; for in regard to those who are removed by unexpected accidents, who have not a

moment to bestow on their great change ; and in regard to those who die without enjoying the use of their reason, it is very possible that they die without having any of these thoughts, and without performing any of these acts, as well they who die in the love and in the favor of God, as those who are always the objects of his hatred and of his vengeance. :

The second difference marks rather what it ought to be than what it always is. It would be right and their bounden duty, that when death comes to take the children of God, it should find them actually engaged in their work, devoted to their God, and seeking diligently to be saved. But as there are those who grow remiss from time to time, without, however, losing their faith or piety, without even falling into any very considerable fault ; as, besides, it is not impossible but they may die in this state, I do not believe that this may be so constant and so uniform, that the contrary might not occur.

It is then the first of these differences which is most certain and most essential of all. It is certain also that the rule which we can establish upon it admits of no exception. The reverse of it never happens. It was never known that a man dying in a state of grace died otherwise than well, or that dying well he died in a state of sin.

In every age and instance the man who dies in a state of sin dies miserably; as on the contrary every man who dies holily dies in a state of grace, and every man who dies in a state of grace dies holily; whether it be a natural or a violent death; whether it be in the clear exercise of reason or in the total privation of it. Let the approach of death be gradual and perceptible, let it be sudden and unexpected, the rule I am about to establish is equally infallible. It deserves then our primary attention, as it reduces every thing to a knowledge of what it is to die in a state of sin or in a state of grace. This is what we are now about to illustrate.

CHAPTER III.

THAT THERE ARE TWO STATES IN WHICH WE MAY DIE, A
STATE OF SIN AND A STATE OF GRACE.

It will be acknowledged that there are two different estates in which we may be found, a state of sin and a state of grace. It will moreover be acknowledged that these two states are so opposite that it will be equally impossible to be found in both at a time, and not to be found in either. The state of sin consists not in being a sinner. Who is not a sinner? It consists not also in actual sin. If this were necessary, the most impious would not be in a state of sin during the time when they sleep, since it is certain they commit no actual sin in sleep. This state consists in having committed one or more sins, of which remission has not been obtained. In fact, during all the time which elapses between a sin and the pardon which God grants to those who ask it of him with a lively faith, the offender is subject to all the most fatal consequences of that sin, particularly to the wrath of God, and to the necessity of suffering his vengeance for ever. This is what the Scriptures call "*being in sin*,"

as it appears from those words of St. Paul, 1 Cor. xv, "*If CHRIST be not risen your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins.*" That is to say, apparently your sins have not been expiated, they have not been pardoned; you have now only to expect your punishment. On the contrary, a state of grace consists in not having committed any sin for which we have not obtained the mercy of God: and as God pardons the sins of those only who ask with a lively faith and sincere repentance, it is evident that a state of grace implies on the part of God the remission of all past sins, whatever they may be, and faith and repentance on the part of man.

By this we clearly discover what it is to die in one of these two estates. We can easily comprehend that every man who dies without obtaining the mercy of God, the remission of one or of many sins into which he has fallen; or which amounts to the same thing, every man who, after having sinned, has not implored the mercy of God with a lively faith and sincere repentance, dies in sin, and consequently infallibly perishes.

On the contrary, every man who has truly repented of all his sins past, has a lively faith in God's mercy through CHRIST, and is in charity with all men; dies in a state of grace, and consequently without doubt is saved. This alone is

sufficient to show how unhappy it is to die in a state of sin. I can conceive of nothing so miserable, and every thing else seems as nothing in comparison with it. It is a sad thing, I acknowledge, to be born in sin; it is to be "*by nature a child of wrath,*" as St. Paul speaks. But this misfortune is not without remedy: after being born in sin we may be born again, we may be regenerated, and consequently become children of God, and heirs of his heavenly kingdom.*

It is a frightful thing to live in a state of sin, and this misery is altogether greater than the preceding. But there is such a thing as escape from it; we may renounce sin; we may forsake it; and finally die in the love and in the favor of God, which ensures our eternal happiness. But when we die in sin we are lost without remedy; and

* The pious author adopts a phraseology common with many of the writers of his and our day, in his use of the word regeneration; but that the language of Scripture and of the ancient writers of the Church uniformly apply the term regeneration to baptism, denoting the change from a state of nature to a state of grace, may be seen by a reference to them. The compilers of our liturgy, and the framers of several Protestant confessions have in this followed the authority of the primitive Church; neither they nor the primitive Fathers ever apply it to signify a change of heart and life: and this return from sin to holiness they denote by the terms renovation and repentance. — See Hobart's Works, vol. ii. serm. 34.

neither the mercy of God, nor the satisfaction of his Son, nor the graces of his Spirit can afford any remedy for such an evil. Thus we cannot conceive any thing more terrible than the menace which JESUS CHRIST held forth to the Jews, when he said, "*Ye shall die in your sins.*" On the contrary, the greatest blessing we can enjoy is, to die in a state of grace, and after having obtained of God perfect remission of all our sins: for in the first place, this remission of itself is an inestimable benefit, as speaks the Psalmist — "*Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered: blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.*" (Ps. xxxii. 1, 2.)

Besides, this grace is inseparable from the love of God, according to the words of the prophet Malachi; — "*They shall be mine, saith the LORD of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels, and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.*" And what can we conceive more important, as well during life as chiefly in death, than to be the object of the love of God; than to be of the number of those of whom the Psalmist speaks when he says, "*Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.*" (Ps. cxvi.)

Finally, dying in a state of grace we are infallibly saved. We leave the earth that we may take possession of heaven, and reign eternally with **JESUS CHRIST**; as speaks St. John — “*I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the LORD from henceforth: Yea, saith the SPIRIT, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.*”

CHAPTER IV.

DEATH SHOULD FIND US ACTUALLY EMPLOYED IN OUR DUTY.

WHAT I have just said will sufficiently point out the first disposition requisite to a good death. JESUS CHRIST recommends a second when he says, (Luke xii.,) “*Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the LORD, when he cometh, shall find watching. Verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.*” To this he adds, “*Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath.*”

Our Saviour delivers two things in charge to this servant, whom he proposes as a model of our conduct. The one, that when the master should

return from the wedding, he should find him ready to open. The other, that he should find him engaged in that duty which he had commanded before his departure, watching over his fellow-servants, and himself performing his task.

This doubtless teaches us that we ought not only to hold ourselves in readiness to receive JESUS CHRIST when he shall come to us in the hour of death, as we should if we remained steadfast in a state of grace : but beside that, we should be continually in action, endeavoring, exactly and faithfully, to serve this good master, each in his way following the employment assigned to him.

The reason of this is, that he has not placed us in the world merely that we should not offend him, but to serve him with a *positive* concern to do what he has commanded us. If he had only the first of these two designs in view, it would not have been necessary that he should have given us so great a number of faculties, graces, and helps, which he has seen fit to grant us. The stones, and other insensible parts of nature to which he has not thus extended his favor, offend him not. He has given us these then, that they may excite us to serve him with all possible care. We are the trees which he has planted in his Church, which is termed in holy Scripture "*his vine*" and "*his husbandry*." But does it satisfy

him though these trees bring not forth evil fruit? Does he not expect that they will bring forth *good fruit* each in their season; or to speak more exactly, in every season?

What is the complaint uttered by the householder in the parable?

Is it not that the fig tree which he had planted in his vineyard brought forth no fruit? Is not that the only reason he alleges for the order which he gives to cut it down? "*Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground.*" To escape this severe sentence, we must "*bring forth fruits meet for repentance;*" that is to say, we must be continually given to all good works. This is also what CHRIST teaches us in the parable of the talents. He compares himself to a rich man, who at his departure upon a long journey, calls his servants and delivers unto them his goods, which they are commanded to improve by trading during his absence. At his return he finds some have doubled their allotted portion; these he approves, applauds, and rewards magnificently. But he also finds one who, instead of improving his talent, had buried it in the earth, and contents himself to return only what he had received. Such conduct fills the master with indignation, and he commands — "*Cast ye the*

unprofitable servant into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

This will teach us without difficulty, that we should improve the grace which God affords us; that we should profit by the helps which he gives us. This should serve to correct our faults, and should lead us to obtain the perfections which we need. This is what we should earnestly labor to acquire: and we should be inspired with a fear of his wrath, lest, when he comes to us, or calls us to himself by death, he may find that we have left unperformed the service he so reasonably expected. But it may be inquired, Is it not sufficient if we have improved our talents some time before; and will it then be necessary to labor at the time immediately previous to death? On this supposition it would always be true, that we had so increased the number of our talents that we might render CHRIST more than sufficient to escape the malediction of the unprofitable servant.

This idea might have some force if our Master had confided to us no new talent between the time which has passed and that when we shall have ceased to act. But as we each day, or more properly speaking, each moment, receive some new talent; as there is not a moment in which God gives us not new grace, fresh supplies of help; it is evident that unless we labor with unrelaxed

ardor, we shall have to apprehend the sentence of the unprofitable servant; and thus there can be no point of time when repose would be safe or allowable. I moreover add, that the idea might have force if the improvement we had made of the talents which God has given us formed, I will not say any equivalent, but any proportion to those talents. As this never can occur, and there is always a melancholy disparity between what we do and what we ought to do, or rather what we might do; there is consequently no moment in which we should not labor not only to discharge the obligation which arises from that moment itself, but besides, to repair in some degree our past negligence, and to do what we ought to have done some time before. Above all, it is right to redouble our efforts when we contemplate the approach of death, because in fact we see the time shortened in which alone it will be possible for us to work. We should imitate travellers, who, seeing the night approach, and knowing that they are still far off from the place where they desire to be, quicken their steps and walk with accelerated speed. Such is the admonition of CHRIST when he says, "*Yet a little while is the light with you; walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you; for he that walketh in darkness, knoweth not whither he goeth. The night cometh when no man can work.*" (John ix. 4, and xii. 35.)

CHAPTER V.

TO DIE WELL, WE MUST REPENT OF OUR SINS.

WHAT has thus far engaged our attention, applies to all dying persons without distinction; what we are about to consider, concerns only those who see the approach of death, and are not ignorant that they are about to pay this debt of nature. These are necessarily obliged to perform many duties, the omission of which, would infallibly be imputed to them, however God might be pleased to dispense with them in others who are overtaken by sudden death.

The first of these duties, comprehends all the acts of repentance, which a near view of approaching death, and expectation of judgment to come, is calculated to excite in the heart. In fact, a dying person should consider himself, as one who is about to appear in a few moments before the tribunal of God, and there to render him an exact account of his life. It is evident that he should neglect nothing to avoid condemnation, since if he should, his ruin would be inevitable, and his misery without remedy. There is but one way of avoiding this, which is to condemn himself at

the bar of conscience. To conduct the action with a holy severity; to anticipate the judgment of God, by that which he pronounces against himself. In this sense, as in every other, if we "*judge ourselves, we shall not be judged of the LORD.*" But more distinctly to see the truth of these remarks, it is to be observed, that there are three descriptions of dying persons, that is, of those who are sensible of the near approach of death. The first are they, who have always lived in sin, as well they who have been absolutely subject to the tyranny of this cruel master, as they who have hastily supposed themselves delivered from its bondage, by one of those imperfect and useless conversions, which always leaves in the heart an unmortified love of the world and of its perishing advantages; in a word, who have never been truly converted from sin to holiness.

The second are they, who, though made the children of God by adoption and grace, have fallen from their regeneration, into certain gross sins, of which St. Paul informs us in various places, and of which he declares that they who do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God; and who after having fallen into them either have not repented of them at all, or have had only an extremely feeble repentance, and by no means proportioned to the magnitude of their faults.

The last are those children of God who, from the time they were first devoted to him, have never committed any of those great sins, or who, having committed any of them, have recovered their lost state of favor, by manifest and particular repentance, and have neglected no means to obtain perfect remission and forgiveness. It is here maintained that repentance is necessary to all of these. To the first it is undeniably so; "*except they repent they shall perish.*"

To the second it is likewise so, for though they are the children of God, and their adoption has given them a certain and incontestible right to the heavenly inheritance, the sin into which they have afterward fallen, has suspended the enjoyment of this right, and has thrown an obstacle in the way of their salvation, which cannot be removed but by a lively and sincere repentance. The last of these also are not dispensed from this necessity. Admit in fact that they have not committed any great sins, such as those I am about to name. That they have not committed a great number of those faults from which the most holy are not entirely exempt; how often may they not convict themselves of indulging vain thoughts? How often have they uttered idle and useless words? How often have propensities far from innocent agitated their hearts? How often have

they omitted actions which were right and their bounden duty, by which they might have advanced the glory of God, the good of their neighbor, and the salvation of their souls? I know that the sins of this description have neither ruined nor indeed suspended the rights which their Christian adoption has given them. I know that God has not on account of these, refused to regard them still with his love. But is that a reason which should discharge them from the necessity of a sincere and lively grief? Though these may not be as great sins as others into which the wicked fall so habitually, yet they still are sins, and are consequently proper subjects of grief; they are always criminal imperfections, which we must endeavor to correct, and which but ill accord with the character of children of God, which we have the honor to sustain. I admit that God does not punish the imperfections of our virtue—I admit that he bears with them. But upon what principles does he bear with them? Is it upon the principle of his justice? By no means. If he followed no other rule than his justice, he would rigorously punish these sins, nay he would punish them with hell. For in fine, according to the laws of a severe and rigorous justice, these sins merit hell, and if God does not thus threaten his own dear children, it is in consequence of his con-

descending goodness, and by no means an act of his justice. Such being the case, Christians should not forgive themselves, they should groan sincerely before God, acknowledging themselves unworthy of the forbearance which it has pleased him to manifest toward them.

This is the more just, since indeed one of these sins, though of itself not great, yet when accumulated with others, of the same, or of a different description, creates an amount, the malignity of which, must always be very considerable. A single drop of water is a small thing; but there may fall a sufficient number of these to occasion a deluge. It may in like manner happen to one of God's children to fall into so great a number of these faults that they give just cause of confusion to him, and indeed the occasion of serious apprehension. Besides, how few are there of believers to whom it never happens that they commit any of those great sins which according to St. Paul shut up against us the gate of heaven? How few are there, whose life has been so pure, that it has been passed in the exercise of an uninterrupted piety. Thus the greater part, and nearly all without exception, have but too much reason "*to groan, being burdened*" with the remembrance of their sins. It is nothing to the purpose to say that these their sins have been forgiven. It is

nothing to the purpose that they have sought and obtained the pardon of them, and that they have reason to believe that this favor of God has indeed been granted them. The assurance of this may possibly banish all the fears of the soul, but I maintain that it should not banish its grief. Never does the true child of God remember the faults into which he has fallen, without deep self-reproach. I am persuaded, for instance, that Adam never forgave himself his sin. That David never lost, either the remembrance, or the penitence, which his doubly aggravated crime of adultery, and murder, occasioned. That St. Peter never forgot his thrice repeated denial of his Master, and that each of these saints unceasingly grieved for their offences, after they were even assured of the Divine forgiveness. I maintain therefore that no dying person, of whatever description he may be, and whatever may have been his life, when he approaches his great change, can be discharged from the duty of repentance. But this will more fully appear in the sequel.

CHAPTER VI.

FAITH IS NECESSARY TO A GOOD DEATH.

FAITH is not less necessary than REPENTANCE to a good and happy death. It is not even possible to repent holily and effectually without faith. Is it not this supernatural light which discovers to us both the deformity of sin and its fatal consequences if not pardoned, as well as how greatly we are interested to avoid it, and the reasons for our confident persuasion that our repentance shall not be in vain? Thus it being impossible to die well without repentance, or effectually to repent without faith, it is evident that faith is absolutely necessary to a good and happy death. As faith gives birth to repentance, it produces also the other virtues which are necessary to a good death: it inspires the hope of a blessed immortality; the love of God, and of our neighbor; submission to the will of Providence; spiritual joy, humility, and other graces. It enables us to perceive the motives which awaken all these sentiments; and it is self-evident to every one, that they can none of them be formed in the soul of the unbeliever. But besides this, who

does not see, that faith alone could sustain a dying man, and that without the help which this grace gives him, it is impossible but that he should sink beneath the power of those temptations which may proceed, either on the one hand from nature, or on the other from conscience. That death appears frightful to nature, it is not necessary to prove. Every man sufficiently feels the truth of this in his own reflections, without needing the effort of an argument for his conviction. How then are we to contemplate the approach of this formidable enemy without fear; or more properly to speak, without dismay, unless sustained and fortified by faith? All other help is useless; this alone can establish and assure us, by discovering to us a felicity of which death is about to give us the possession. "*We know,*" says St. Paul, "*that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.*" (2 Cor. v. 1, 2.)

Faith enables us further to triumph over another temptation, which is not less dangerous than the one preceding. We shall not be armed against the fears of death, except by the persuasion that God loves us, and that he will shortly

give us sensible proofs of his love, by transporting us to heaven and receiving us to a contemplation of his glory. But our natural reason presents obstacles to this persuasion. It tells us, that if God had such love for us, and intended to favor us in such a manner, he would not permit us to fall into a state equally sad and deplorable as that in which we find ourselves. He would deliver us from pain and uneasiness, and from death itself. As there is nothing in our outward condition which distinguishes us from the most abandoned transgressors, it would persuade us that we vainly imagine God will distinguish us in other things, or that he entertains for us all those sentiments of tenderness and benevolence of which we flatter ourselves as secure.

Nothing but faith can persuade us to the contrary of these suggestions, in discovering to us that every thing which reason presents to us to cast us into despair, consists only in simple probabilities, which it would be absurd to prefer to immutable truth, and to the full and entire certainty of the Word of God, which so expressly asserts the contrary, by teaching us that the dearest objects of the Divine love, those who are destined for the most exalted glory, are not exempt from the same sufferings and griefs, nor generally from the same temporal evils, as the objects

of his hatred; and that the characteristic marks by which the former are distinguished from the latter consists not in external or sensible appearances.

On the other hand, conscience terrifies us by reproaching us for our sins, and menacing the judgment of God, before whom we are destined to appear immediately after death. It tells us that we are such grievous sinners, that we cannot but fear being condemned by our Judge, who will weigh in his just balances all that we have done, from the day of our birth to the present moment. Thus, far from receiving hope from such a view of our future state, we are only thereby terrified and thrown into still greater consternation. This mode of reasoning appears very plausible, nevertheless faith delivers us from it. It restores serenity to the heart by persuading us of the truth of those promises which God has made in his Word, assuring us that "*he desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he may turn from his wickedness and live;*" that "*though our sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool;*" that "*if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins;*" and that "*the blood of CHRIST cleanseth from all sin.*" Hereby we discover what in such a crisis is the

use of faith. Hence also it is that the Scriptures speak of dying in faith, when they would describe the death of the righteous. "*These all died in faith,*" says the Apostle when speaking of the patriarchs: and CHRIST in the same sense exhorts the angel of the Church of Smyrna "*to be faithful unto death.*" On these grounds, moreover, St. Paul, when he would point out to us the reasons he had for expecting all that glory which God has reserved for his dear children in heaven, considers it sufficient to say, "*I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith;*" concluding hence, that "*a crown of righteousness*" was "*laid up*" for him.

This view explains to us also that expression of the Holy Spirit in the Apocalypse, where, to distinguish those who die holily, he simply speaks of them that "*they die in the LORD.*" For who does not know that it is faith which unites us to this great Saviour; which makes us to become "*one spirit;*" and to be "*planted together with him:*" as says the Apostle, "*that CHRIST may dwell in your hearts by faith.*" This also explains his words on another occasion, — "*That I may be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is by the faith of JESUS CHRIST.*" Finally, the

same truth is conveyed by our Saviour's charge —
“*Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.*” (Luke xii. 35, 36.)

CHAPTER VII.

THE HOPE OF A BLESSED IMMORTALITY IS NECESSARY TO A
DYING PERSON.

NOTHING is of greater moment to a dying person than the hope of all that glory and felicity which is reserved for the Christian in the life to come. This sustains him amidst all the infirmities of nature. By this means death, which otherwise would be so frightful, may become desirable, since in fact it leads us to dwell less upon what it is in itself, than on those eternal blessings, the possession of which it would accelerate. But not to be misunderstood upon a subject which is so very important, it is to be remarked, that the glory of heaven may be the object of our hope, in two very different ways, *absolutely* or *conditionally*. We hope for it *conditionally*, when we assure ourselves of its possession in the practice of all those things which God requires of them to whom he promises it; and this hope is the necessary and inseparable consequence of a genuine faith. For how can we be persuaded of that which God has revealed in his Gospel, as we must of necessity in order to

have a true faith, and yet doubt whether in the practice of that which the Gospel requires, we shall be admitted to the possession of that which it promises? I believe also that this hope is essential to the child of God, and inseparable from a state of grace. I can also hardly imagine that it can even be subdued in the true believer by any fear that may arise to oppose it. I am persuaded at least, that such a fear would be of itself a grievous sin, for which remission could not be obtained, except by particular and earnest supplication of the Father of mercies; and this too with deep and heartfelt contrition.

I do not exactly apply the same remark to an *absolute hope*. This I admit is often foolish and rash. In fact, it is undeniably so when we assure ourselves of eternal felicity without having fulfilled the conditions upon which the Gospel permits us to hope for it; or even without an examination whether we have so fulfilled them. Such a hope is vain, foolish and absurd; it is even pernicious; and nothing can interpose more serious obstacles in the way of our salvation. But this is on the one hand very useful and very salutary; and on the other, well founded and judicious, when it springs from a clear and certain conviction that we have done what God requires of those for whom he has prepared the

kingdom of his glory. And as what God requires is a lively faith and a sincere repentance, we may assure ourselves of possessing this eternal benefit, when we realize such a faith and such a hope. It is certain also that we may remark this assurance in the greater part of those whose piety has been at all eminent; at least it is apparent in the most illustrious saints of whom the Scriptures speak. Thus St. Paul informs us of the patriarchs — “*These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth; for they that say such things, declare plainly that they seek a country; and truly if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned: but now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly.*” Jacob in particular expired pronouncing these words, — “*I have waited for thy salvation, O LORD.*” Job expresses the same sentiment; — “*I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.*” David had the same hope; “*I have set the LORD always*

before me : because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoiceth : my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life : in thy presence is fulness of joy ; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore. I will behold thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." But nothing can be more emphatic than the language of St. Paul ; — "*I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the LORD, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day ; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."* (2 Tim. i. 12, iv. 8.)

Need we then be astonished that these saints should thus express themselves ? Those indeed who had spent a large part of their lives in denouncing this assurance, and who in their writings had treated it as a vain presumption, have spoken a very different language upon the bed of death. We know what Cardinal Bellarmine has written on this subject in his controversial works. The following, however, are the senti-

ments attributed to him by Fuligatus his biographer, chap. 37, — “We see evidently in him, that perfect love had so cast out all fear from his soul, that he was assured of his salvation.” The language of Sansedoni is to the same effect; — “His hope was so lively, that he was often heard to say, he ‘desired to go to his house,’ by which he signified paradise. And on another occasion he said to me with great confidence, ‘We go to paradise:’ doubtless from the abundant assurance of his heart his mouth thus spake.” From which it appears, that the Church of Rome wrongfully condemns this absolute hope, as she generally does. Nothing, on the contrary, is more becoming to the children of God than this sentiment.

But it may be inquired, Is it not possible that they may be safe and yet not realize all this assurance of hope? Is it not possible they may have some apprehensions of death, and yet be God’s dear children? I answer, it is very possible that a Christian, truly converted and renovated, may not be sufficiently informed of the characteristics of renovation, and may therefore regard certain defects not incompatible with this state as certain evidences of a state of sin, and of spiritual death. It is very possible on the other hand, that this renewal of the mind may be so

imperfect and feeble, that it will be difficult to know its sincerity and truth. Its characteristics may be so obscure, so dim, so indistinct, as that scarcely to him shall they be perceptible. Under such circumstances he will suppose there is no ground for the assurance of hope. There will be a state of oscillation between hope and fear. He will not indeed doubt the mercy of God : such a doubt would be criminal and inadmissible : but he may doubt whether his heart be right toward God : he may apprehend whether the good emotions excited therein may not merely be the effect of self-love, and by no means the fruit of the Spirit of God. Such apprehensions are very ordinary, and there is sometimes more to hope for those who suffer them, than for those who are exempt from them.

Notwithstanding, I am persuaded of three things ; the first is, that if the Christian has not this assurance, it is his own fault ; for if he has not been sufficiently instructed in the marks of a true conversion, it results from his negligence ; it being his bounden duty to learn these important things of which he is ignorant. And if his conversion is imperfect, is he not culpable in not having labored still further to have promoted it ? Thus, strictly speaking, it is our duty to hope, and it is our fault to fear.

In the second place, I am persuaded that this absolute hope is very useful and very salutary, provided it is solid and well founded. In fact, without it, it is impossible to experience that inward peace, which is so sweet and consoling at all times, and above all, at the approach of death ; and very difficult to die with an entire resignation to the will of God.

Finally, I say, however a Christian may want this assurance of hope for some length of time, sooner or later the Spirit of God will grant it in a smaller or greater degree.

If this third proposition be not entirely certain, as I will not presume to say it is, it at least appears to me very probable.

Here it may be inquired whether any difference exists between hope and trust ?

An able writer, who proposes this question, replies, that hope terminates in *things*, and trust in *persons*. He says, we hope for a good we desire, and we trust in a person who can give or procure us this good. I am not entirely of this opinion ; I believe we can trust equally as well in things as in persons. The worldling trusts in his riches, and in his credit, and in his skill : the rich man's wealth is his "*strong city*," says the wise man, and the avaricious man says to his gold, "*Thou art my god ; and to the fine gold, thou art*

my confidence." And in speaking of the trust of a Christian, is it not true that we confide in the satisfaction of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and in the efficacy of his precious blood? I believe, therefore, that the true distinction is this, — that hope has for its object the blessing we desire; and trust the cause or the means which is to procure it for us. Thus the felicity of heaven is the object of Christian hope; and God, who has promised to give it to us, is the object of our trust. We trust in God, and we hope for the blessedness which he will give us. However this may be, hope and trust are inseparable the one from the other; and hence they are indiscriminately used in Scripture, which speaks of our hoping in God when it would express our trust in him: "*Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him,*" says Job; and St. Peter says, "*that your faith and hope may be in God.*"

CHAPTER VIII.

A DYING PERSON SHOULD LOVE GOD AND HIS NEIGHBOR.

IT can admit of no doubt that the love of God is necessary to a dying person ; for he that loves not God must be assuredly an object of his displeasure and abhorrence. “ *If any man love not the LORD JESUS CHRIST,*” says the Apostle, “ *let him be anathema maranatha.*”* If he love not God, if he does not even love him supremely, and with a love of preference, he can never be a disciple of JESUS CHRIST. “ *If any man,*” says he, “ *come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also,* (that is, if he love not God above all these,) *he cannot be my disciple.*”† How then shall it be possible for him to die well, being deficient in this virtue ? But besides this, it is certain that the love of God, of itself, and if I may be allowed so to speak, of its own power, has a peculiar efficacy in preparing us for a happy death. In the first place, nothing is more acceptable to God than such a disposition of the heart.

* 1 Cor. xvi. 22. † Luke xiv. 26.

Nothing, therefore, is better calculated to secure for us his love in return, and all the effects of this love, among which we must doubtless consider the necessary aids for a happy death. Besides, the approach of death is one of those occasions, when the necessity of renewing our acts of love to God, is peculiarly urgent. There is a twofold kind of love; a love of interest and a disinterested love. By the first of these, we love God as our supreme good, and we desire to possess him, and to see his face. By the second we study to please him, as well because he merits it by his own perfections, as because the consideration of his goodness and of his past favors, leads us to it. But when can this love be more necessary than at the last moments of life? When have we a more favorable opportunity for its exercise? During life the soul is far from God, it is in exile from heaven; it grovels upon earth, this abode of darkness and of misery. Death terminates our exile, and introduces us into our native country: it conducts us to the presence of God. Consequently, when God calls us to die, he calls us to himself; he offers us the possession of himself; he is ready to unite himself to us. Can we restrain ourselves from responding with the most holy transport to such a call? Shall we not exclaim with the Psalmist, "*As the hart panteth after the water*

*brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O GOD; my soul thirsteth for GOD, for the living GOD; when shall I come and appear before GOD?" "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of Hosts; my soul longeth, yea even fainteth for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living GOD,"**

The consideration of the goodness and mercy of GOD excites the love of gratitude, which approaches near to that, which we have denominated the love of disinterestedness. But when have we more remarkable or affecting proofs of this love, than at the approach of death? Where can we look without discovering them? The past brings before our view what GOD has done for us; all the favors he has granted us; all the blessings we have received; all the evils from which he has preserved us; the wonderful help he has afforded us; the patience he has exercised toward us; the long-suffering goodness with which he has borne with our errors, our negligences, and our ingratitude. The present exhibits his grace in admonishing us of our end, in leaving us the use of our faculties, and giving us various aids by which we are placed in a situation favorable to an examination of the important concerns of conscience; a

* Psalm xlii. 1, 2. lxxxiv. 1, 2.

most inestimable favor, which is not the privilege of all. The future opens to us all that glory to which he is about to promote us; all that felicity of which he is about to give us the possession. Can these objects be presented to the soul without exciting holy transports of love, of gratitude, and of zeal, and without creating the strong desire to realize them, with still more purity and perfection than we are able, in this inferior state, where all desire still remains unsatisfied?

We must of necessity then, love God, if we desire to die the death of the righteous. But this of itself is not sufficient: we must also love our neighbor. In fact, the love of our neighbor is inseparable from the love of God, as St. John distinctly assures us; "*If any man says he love God and hate his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?*"* Besides, it is only with aversion that God regards those who love not their neighbor. St. John assures us that not only he who actually "*hates his brother,*" but also he that "*loves him not, abideth in death:*"† and St. Paul in the same sense declares, that to be wanting in charity is to be wanting in every thing; maintaining that even martyrdom

* 1 John iv. 20.

† iii. 14.

itself, which appears to be the last effort of piety and Christian constancy, is useless without this virtue; "*and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*"* We hence see the judgment we must form of those, who even at death maintain bitterness and animosity against their neighbor. It is evident that they die with the worst of all possible dispositions. It is certain there is no pardon for them; and St. James has pronounced their sentence, when he declares, "*They shall have judgment without mercy who have showed no mercy.*"†

* 1 Cor. xiii. 3.

† James ii. 13.

CHAPTER IX.

TO DIE WELL, WE MUST BE ENTIRELY SUBMISSIVE TO THE
WILL OF GOD.

SUBMISSION to the will of God is, without controversy, one of the most sacred and indispensable of our duties. It is one of the most considerable parts of that denial of ourselves which, according to JESUS CHRIST, is so necessary to those who would follow him. "*If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.*" (Luke ix. 23.) This duty consists chiefly in not following either our own caprice, or our own inclinations, or our own wishes, but the supreme will of our Master; doing, not that which pleases ourselves, but that which it pleases him to command us, saying as CHRIST did, "*Not as I will, but as thou wilt.*" This obligation is founded chiefly upon two things; the one is, the power and authority which God has over us, in consequence of which he never can admit of opposition to the decisions of his will. We are not our own, we are his property, having nothing but what he has given us, and subsisting only by a miracle of his

power. It is just, therefore, that we should obey him, and this we cannot refuse to do without manifest injustice. The other foundation of this duty is, the infinite superiority of the Divine wisdom above our own. It concerns us to know who it is should govern, God or men. It concerns us to know whether God should accommodate himself to the desires, or to speak more properly, to the caprices of men, or whether men should submit themselves to the will of God. To know which of these two is most just, we have only to consider how limited are our lights, and how vast and extended are those of God. We almost invariably deceive ourselves, but God can never be deceived. It is then just that he should conduct us, and that we should correspond to his glory in rendering him obedience. To act otherwise is evidently to set up the pretension that our will is more correct and more conformable to all the maxims of reason and of wisdom than that of God; a pretension equally impious and extravagant.

Nothing, then, is more becoming than submission to the will of God. This disposition, at all times necessary, is eminently so at the hour of death. The reason is, that there is no other period in which so many things are presented to oppose our inclinations. There are *three* which principally require submission to the will of God;

sickness, with its various symptoms; oftentimes the lingering approach of death; but much more frequently, and almost always the rapidity with which it comes to cut the thread of life.

Sickness is not always attended with the same symptoms; some are more distressing than others, but there are none that do not appear to us inconvenient or insupportable. If we suffer them for any length of time with fortitude, it is not long before we are wearied by them: we become impatient; and we consider it a great effort of virtue if we do not give utterance to complaints and murmuring. But in fact it is our duty to submit absolutely and without repugnance to the will of God; with the firm persuasion that this will is not only very just, but very good and very benevolent; so much so, that it causes us to suffer nothing but that which will be for our advantage, and which is particularly calculated to promote our sanctification and salvation. But as I shall speak more particularly of this in the sequel, I shall not here detain the reader, but pass to the *second* occasion, which calls us to show our submission to the will of God. It is that which arises often from our impatience, and which occasions that whatever repugnance or aversion we may feel for death, it happens frequently that excess of pain leads us to desire it, not that we may

be united to God, not to be put in possession of his glory, and to see his face, but only that we may be delivered from our present suffering, which our infirmity leads us to suppose peculiarly severe. This impatience is doubtless very blameable; it arises from a want of consideration, that if death delays, it is because God sees it not fit to hasten it; and as he is infinitely merciful, he must have not only substantial reasons for such a disposition of things, but besides this, reasons derived from our own interest, which must require that we should suffer precisely what we do suffer. Consequently, to oppose ourselves to him, is to run into one or the other of two extremes; either to prefer our limited and feeble conclusions to those of infinite wisdom, or to make a greater account of ease for this miserable flesh, which is at the point of perishing, than of the true interests of the soul, to the sanctification and salvation of which, we ought to presume that what we suffer can contribute in some great and important degree. We should, therefore, be always ready both to suffer and to remain upon earth as long as it shall please God to detain us here for his glory, and for our own salvation. We should stifle all those repugnances which the flesh opposes to the execution of the Divine will, and

say from the heart, "*Thy holy will, O LORD, be done.*"

But we must admit that this occasion for exercising such submission to the will of God is rare and extraordinary in comparison with the third. We have much more repugnance to leave the world than to remain in it. It more frequently appears to us that death comes too soon than that it delays its approach. We are fearfully attached to this miserable life; and although it be so chequered a scene, and composed of more ills than years, we cannot bear the idea of its coming to a conclusion. It is then principally for this reason that we have occasion to make every exertion, to submit absolutely and unreservedly to the will of God. We should consider that he is the Master of all things, and that particularly life and death are in his power; that as he has given to us the first, so he can take it away; and that it would be an extreme injustice to dispute with him this right. He could have left us in our original state of non-existence, with that infinite number of creatures whose being was only possible, but who never have existed, and who never will exist. Having given us life, he could have instantly deprived us of it. Since, then, instead of thus dealing with us, he has preserved us until the present moment, far from complaining because

he leaves us no longer in the world, let us thank him that he has placed us there, and so long preserved us.

It is, besides, proper to consider that all we gain by our impatience is, that we thus render ourselves on the one hand more criminal, and on the other more miserable. We do not by this means place death one moment farther from us : it will not be less sudden nor less inexorable : all that we do by that is to add new sins to those we have already committed. We raise thoughts in the heart opposed to the will of God ; and besides, we torment ourselves ; while, on the other hand, by resigning ourselves to God, we might enjoy a rest and tranquillity inconceivable and eternal. Finally, it is well to consider, that it is an absurdity to find fault with a law as old as the world, and which has been executed upon all, as well the greatest as the best. If *we* only were called to die, we might have reason to think it grievous ; but is it not very unjust to complain when our lot is the same as that of the whole human race without exception ? It will no doubt be alleged, that the complaint is not so much that we are subject to death, but only that we must die so soon. We would be satisfied to die if death could be delayed a few years : but besides that this delay would never seem to us sufficient, and that we should

always think death had come too soon,* let me ask, Shall not others die until it suits their convenience? Let us not complain, then, of our allotment, and let us readily submit to a law which we cannot change for the better.

* "The less we have of earth the more of heaven."

CHAPTER X.

EXAMINATION OF THE CAUSES OF OUR REPUGNANCE TO DEATH.

FROM what has been said, it very clearly appears that we should be resigned to die whenever God sees fit to call us. But further to investigate this subject, it may not be amiss to inquire into the causes of that difficulty, which we find in the practice of this duty. There are four in particular that deserve our attention.

I. The propensity of nature, which irresistibly inclines us to love life, and consequently to avoid death.

II. The excessive attachment to the good things of this world, which death wrests from our possession.

III. The unbelief which prevents a proper estimation of those advantages which death procures for our enjoyment; and

IV. The apprehension of the judgment of God, which we must undergo immediately after death.

The first of these is harmless; indeed, we may say that God is the author of it. But all innocent as it may be, both in itself and in its nature, it becomes criminal when it leads us to oppose the

will of God. It is the will of God that we should die. Is not this sufficient to oblige us to resist this yearning of our nature, and to suppress all the repugnances which we feel to the discharge of this duty? Nature impels us with equal force to love and seek for enjoyment. Whether this enjoyment be criminal or innocent, it is equally agreeable to nature. But however agreeable it may be, should we not renounce it when we find it to be criminal? If, then, piety obliges us to resist this inclination, which is so natural, why should it not oblige us to combat that which excites our aversion to death? This is so much the more powerful an appeal, as we constantly yield to it from criminal motives. Impatience, despair, ambition, vanity, revenge, are continually leading many not only to endure death without terror, but even to seek after it. Why should not the fear of God, and a concern for our salvation, exert as much power, if not to induce our desire of it, at least to enable us to suffer it with fortitude? It is then a very insignificant excuse to plead the infirmities of nature in justification of an aversion for death.

The world would deride the candidate for military fame who, on some distinguished occasion having failed to perform his duty, should imagine he might thus defend his conduct. And why

should this excuse be available for a Christian, who by that very name professes himself to be in a state divine and supernatural. This is so much the more true, as the worldling has only his own strength to employ in overcoming the infirmities of nature, while the Christian has all the aids of Divine grace, which he has only to ask and he obtains. If he will not condescend to ask, or if he will not ask as he ought, the fault is entirely his own. This first source of our repugnance is therefore inexcusable. The second is much less so, because in fact it is criminal. We love life because we are enchanted with sensible and temporal things, which death removes from our possession. With such a disposition, need we be astonished if death appears so frightful to us, and if we have such difficulty to be reconciled to it? But if it is not strange that loving the world so ardently as we do love it, we have a reluctance to die, it is exceedingly so that in view of death, and not being ignorant of its near approach, we should persist in loving the world. What can it have so desirable, since it can do nothing in arrest of the sentence of death; nor can it avail us any thing after death. Besides, if it has any benefits to offer, it has also its evils; and these very evils are both great in themselves, and attended with a feeling more lively and poignant than all its bene-

fits. Taking every thing into consideration, men cannot in this world pass so well for happy as for unhappy. The occasions of rejoicing are both more rare and more trifling than those on account of which they afflict themselves, and consider themselves miserable :* consequently, the consideration of the state in which we find ourselves upon earth, should lead us to desire rather to leave it, than remain. I add, that if death deprives us of earthly benefits, it is our own fault if it does not procure us others incomparably more substantial, more excellent, more durable, and which in one word are such, that the least of them deserves to be preferred more, I will not say than all that only we ourselves possess upon earth, but more than all which the successive generations of mankind have ever hitherto possessed. To enjoy all this, we have only to die in a holy and Christian manner. In this supposition, it will be a

* NOTE BY THE TRANSLATOR.—This is perhaps taking too gloomy a view of human life, and in some measure an impeachment of the Divine goodness. That there is much misery in the world, much suffering from sin and folly, no one can doubt; yet on the whole the preponderance is on the side of actual enjoyment. If we compare the days of health with those of sickness; the comforts of home; of friends; the enjoyment of food, of rest, shelter, and the *daily* enjoyments which the majority of mankind may possess, we shall find that the balance is in *favor*, rather than *against* human happiness.

thousand times less advantageous to live than to die.

But here is a reflection which decides the question. If the consideration of the benefits of which death deprives us, interferes with our acquiescence in the Divine will, which calls us to part with them, it is evident that we love these advantages more than we love God. This is incontestible. But to love earthly things more than we love God, is not this injustice in the last degree, and prodigious blindness? For what injustice can be greater, or what blindness more consummate than that of estimating benefits so limited and transient more highly than God himself, the infinite and permanent good? Thus this consideration, far from authorizing us to oppose the will of God, serves only to aggravate the sin which is hereby committed; adding to a refusal of obedience to his laws, an affront to his divine majesty, by preferring to him the trifling advantages of time and sense.

The same remark will apply to the third source of repugnance to death, which is unbelief. Whether a man be an unbeliever altogether, or possessed of a faith only that is feeble and indistinct, such a person makes no account of what the Gospel teaches us concerning the blessedness of the saints: he follows no other light than that of

the senses; and as these gross faculties discover nothing but what is sad, and indeed frightful in the state of the dead, this state is regarded as the greatest possible evil which can befall him. At the same time, what can be imagined more criminal than such a sentiment: it might be excusable, perhaps, in a certain sense, for Pagans, directed by nothing but the light of nature, and deprived absolutely of that of the Gospel. But we, to whom this Gospel is preached; we who have been born and brought up in the school of CHRIST; we who profess to believe what he has revealed; are we not in a high degree criminal, if we doubt what he has taught us on this subject, and if we cannot repose upon this testimony?

CHAPTER XI.

THE FINAL CAUSE OF REPUGNANCE TO DEATH.

THE last source of repugnance to death is a dread of the judgment of God, before whose tribunal death conducts us. We know that the moment after we expire, we must appear before this formidable judge, and shall be obliged to render him an exact account of our actions. As we fear the event of this judgment, and are in dread of condemnation, it is not strange that we should shrink from its approach, and that we should be filled with horror at the idea of death, which conducts us to it. This reason, it must be admitted, is not by any means as insufficient as the preceding; it is often very substantial: but to judge soundly of it, it must be considered with reference to the state of those who are inspired with this repugnance. We may arrange them in three different orders: the first have reason to believe that they are in a state of grace, and that their peace is made with God. The second, on the contrary, that their present state is a state of sin and condemnation. The third are ignorant what is their state, either because they have taken

no pains to acquaint themselves with it, or used only partial and insufficient endeavors. If the first apprehend the judgment of God, and if this apprehension creates the repugnance they feel to death, which it is rather difficult, if not impossible to relieve, their fear is very unworthy of them, and exhibits at least a weakness of faith which cannot but be criminal: for how can they doubt, that having obtained already remission of their sins, being adopted and renewed, living and dying in a state of grace, they shall surely be saved and admitted to the enjoyment of eternal blessedness. There would be something so strange and unreasonable in such an apprehension, that I can scarcely believe it possible.

In fact, a man who knows he is in a state of grace, knows that he has faith; there being nothing more essential to such a happy state than this virtue. Notwithstanding this, he fears. He dares not assure himself, even dying in the faith and love of God, that he shall escape death and eternal condemnation. But doubting a truth so clearly and incontestibly revealed as this is, can such a person have faith? What can there be more contrary to faith than such an apprehension? This supposition is, therefore, impossible, and involves a manifest contradiction.

I can also say with truth, that I never saw a person in whom I have ever remarked such strange apprehensions. All of those who have appeared to me fearful of the divine judgment, to which death was conducting them, have given me to understand, that their fears have proceeded solely from the fact, that they could not find in themselves sufficient evidence of the renewal of their minds. This first description of fear, being thus impossible, it is not necessary to delay the reader by any further attention to it.

Not so with the second. They who know their present state to be one of sin and condemnation, are not blameable in fearing death; they are much more so in not fearing it sufficiently; and above all, in not laboring effectually to deliver themselves from the uneasiness which this fear gives them, by placing themselves in a state which may give them a solid ground of hope. Not to fear in such a state is not fortitude, nor the assurance of hope, but profanation, security, stupidity. It is a state above all others the most frightful, and which gives the least hope of salvation for those who are found in it. In fact, it does not appear difficult to bring the greatest sinners to repentance, provided they have strong remorse of conscience. But what can we do for those who have found means in such a degree to stupify conscience

that they no longer reproach themselves for the greatest sins, and fear nothing, whatever cause they may justly have to tremble. It remains for me to consider the last, who are ignorant of their present state.

In this uncertainty it is not surprising that they fear. Why should they not fear, since they see themselves threatened with an evil infinitely formidable, and which they have no reason to hope they can escape. What is astonishing is, that they can allow themselves to remain in a state so uneasy and inconvenient as this. They are in suspense between hope and fear: they see an eternity which awaits them, and they know not whether this shall be an eternity of bliss or an eternity of misery. Can it be that this uncertainty does not disturb them? Yet they may deliver themselves from it, as well by careful self-examination, as by banishing from the heart that which occasions this fear, and by obtaining that which will afford them good ground of hope. If they will not do this, have they a right to claim any sympathy? I hence conclude in the first place, that these two descriptions of fear, having nothing in them exceptionable, but capable of being very useful and very salutary, we should not seek to suppress them, but rather to remove their cause.

I conclude, secondly, that nothing is more reasonable than the method pursued by those who, to assure the hopes of the dying, reason at large with them to show that death, far from being fatal to the children of God, is very advantageous to them: that it transfers them from earth to heaven; from combat to triumph; from misery to bliss. They set before them those passages of Scripture which speak of the happiness and glory of such as die the death of the righteous; and they suppose that all this gives them a right to conclude that they have no occasion to fear death, and that they should rather meet it with joy. But to reason in this way is to delude them; it is to labor to establish truths which are generally acknowledged, and to say nothing whatever of the only thing which creates doubt, or gives foundation for fear. Death is doubtless an advantage, but for whom is it so? Is it for all without exception? Is it so for the ungodly? Is it so for those who die in sin? Quite the contrary: it is the greatest calamity that could possibly befall them. Certainly it is not a favorable change to any but true believers; for those who are children of God; for those who die with his grace and in his love. This is a point which no one disputes. Either then nothing is suitably said, or it is presumed that the dying person whom we endeavor

to arm against the fears which disturb him, belongs to the number of the children of God. For these reasonings are reduced to this : — *Death is not to be feared by true believers : you are a true believer ; you have therefore no reason to fear death.* He to whom we are speaking, doubts not the first of these propositions, which is the only one offered to his attention. He only doubts the second, concerning which nothing is said. He fears least his faith be only a dead faith : he fears least his state be not a state of grace, but a state of sin, of death, and of condemnation. Nothing is said to him to prove the contrary. Can we then deny that such a method is highly injudicious, and insufficiently performs the important work it undertakes ? It may perhaps be said, that nothing is decidedly asserted, but always only charitably supposed. I observe it is only supposition ; but I ask, is there always reason for such a supposition ? Should a thing be regarded as uniformly true, which is often manifestly either false or uncertain ? It is *false* if they who are encouraged remain in a state of sin, as it is possible they do ; and it is *uncertain* if, being in a state of grace, they are insensible of it. The supposition applies with truth only to those who are assured of their adoption, and of their reconciliation with God : and such persons have no need to be certified,

since, as I have already remarked, they do not fear.

When the mind is filled with dread at the approach of death, it is an evidence, either that such a person is not a child of God, or that he is ignorant of it, should this be his real condition. To such a one it would not be proper to say, that he has no occasion to fear. We should examine whether this fear is well founded. If after entering with him into this examination, it is found there is no occasion of fear, he is to be convinced thereof, not by exhibiting to him the blessedness of the saints, but by showing him, that what he has mistaken for evidence of a state of sin, has nothing in it which disproves his being in a state of grace. But if his fear be just, we must endeavor to emancipate him from it, not in stifling it, but in laboring that he may make the transition from a state of sin to a state of grace, which can only be done by kindling in his soul a lively repentance and true faith, as I hope to show in the sequel. It appears from all this, that in truth, submission to the will of God is the duty of all dying persons without exception, but that it is only the true children of God — they who have an assurance of hope, who suitably discharge this duty. These find no difficulty in it: for nothing doubting but that death will render them fully and

perfectly happy, it is evident they need not the persuasion of argument, either to fortify them against fear, or to incline them to receive the mandate with composure and joy.

Not so is it with others; they cannot but tremble in prospect of the danger to which death exposes them, and consequently they cannot but receive it with repugnance. But as this repugnance is in the wicked a consequence of their miserable state, a state in which they pertinaciously and voluntarily determine to remain, it is certainly criminal, and they are in a high degree culpable in thus refusing the proffered pardon of their God, and in not becoming truly penitent. For finally, it is an invariable maxim in morals that a forbidden conduct, however involuntary in itself, is considered voluntary while a person voluntarily remains in those circumstances that involve the necessity of doing it. In respect to the children of God, who, though justified by faith, and renewed, doubt whether these two privileges have been bestowed upon them, it is not impossible but they may fear. But as they labor earnestly and perseveringly to suppress their fears and overcome those repugnances which are the consequences of them, God tolerates in them these infirmities which are in some degree involuntary, and covers them with the merit of his blessed Son, our Saviour, JESUS CHRIST.

CHAPTER XII.

SPIRITUAL JOY IS SUITABLE TO A DYING PERSON.

THE resignation with which it has been shown we should receive the mandate of death, exhausts not the sum of our duties preparatory to this great change. I grant it would suffice if death were purely an evil, unattended by any mixture of good. Under such a supposition, we need only suffer it with fortitude: but as it is highly advantageous, it is proper that we should receive it not only without reluctance, but also with joy. It has been thus considered by Christians in every age. St. Paul *"counts not his life dear unto himself, so that he might finish his course with joy."** Again he assures us he had *"a desire to depart and be with CHRIST, which is far better."*† And again, speaking of all believers he says, *"We are confident and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the LORD."* The truth of this has been often most gloriously illustrated by the holy martyrs. The most frightful punishments could not destroy the tranquillity of

* Acts xx. 24. † Phil. i. 23.

their minds, nor disturb the purity of their joy. They were seen contented and cheerful at the stake, upon the wheel, and on the scaffold. They were heard to sing the praises of God amid the most cruel tortures. There is nothing strange in this. We need only suppose a person, well assured of his peace and reconciliation with God, and that he has no doubt of his favor or of his love. This fact assumed, is it surprising that death should by such be hailed with joy? The Christian loves God; he loves him unreservedly and supremely; and at death he finds himself about to be admitted to "*His presence, where there is fulness of joy,*"* as speak the Scriptures, and to be so intimately and unchangeably united with this great source of all spiritual benediction and grace; that it may be truly said, he is completely in each one of us, and that he fills us with his fulness.

The Christian loves God, and he is about to find himself in a state so happy, and so conformed to the desires of this love, that far from offending him as we constantly do, he will love him perfectly with all his heart, and will praise and bless him; and will in nowise do any thing that can displease him. The Christian fervently loves his

* Ps. xvi. 11.

adorable Son, this immortal bridegroom of the Church, of whom she has been so long deprived; whose absence has so often with tears been lamented. But now he is about to join him in the heavenly paradise, to be separated from him no more for ever. The Christian unceasingly laments at one time the evils he commits; at another those he suffers. He has a thousand storms to encounter, a thousand combats to sustain, a thousand temptations to surmount; and he now finds himself just entering the haven where he would be, gloriously triumphing over all his enemies, who are subdued beneath him. Can all this be realized without being filled with satisfaction and joy? Is it not even true that these causes of exultation are such that they swallow up all that flesh and blood can find to oppose them? Can the soul, powerfully persuaded of these things, regret to leave this world? Can it regard the loss of those few benefits it might have enjoyed, the loss of those miserable and alloyed pleasures which it might there have tasted, the separation of friends or relatives whom it is about to leave, — can all this, I say, make the least impression upon the mind, when it comes to consider the infinite disproportion between what it loses and what it is about to gain? between what life can have desirable and the felicity it hopes to enjoy in heaven?

The Christian regrets not what he loses, since this loss procures something much more excellent and precious. When, for instance, we cheaply purchase that which is necessary and indispensable, we regret not what we give, but we make the expenditure with pleasure. Why should we not do the same on the present occasion? for is it not true, that what death procures for us, is both more excellent and more necessary than that of which it deprives us? Is it not true indeed, that the inequality and disproportion of these two kinds of advantages is extreme, and excludes all kind of comparison? The only thing that can at all imbitter the joy of the believer, is the remembrance of his sins. But the certainty which he possesses that these sins have been pardoned; that JESUS CHRIST has washed them away by his blood; and that GOD, far from punishing them, or reproaching him for them, will have them no more in his remembrance;—this confidence, I say, is sufficient to prevent such a thought from disturbing the purity of his joy, to which he feels he may resign himself without fear of its being excessive. This was the idea of the celebrated martyr who suffered so courageously at Ferrara about the middle of the last century: he evinced great joy at the time when he was led to suffer death. When he was asked the reason thereof,

and was reminded of the example of JESUS CHRIST, who appeared so sorrowful in his agony ; — “ *But,*” he answered, “ *there was great difference between the condition of JESUS CHRIST and his own. My Saviour,*” says he, “ *could not but be afflicted while he was loaded with my crimes ; and I rejoice to know that he has set me free from them, and that I am on the point of joining this great Redeemer, who has blotted out my sins by his precious blood.*” It is certain then, that joy is highly becoming the dying believer. We need only add to this disposition what I have already said on the subject of hope, of which it is the consequence.

It may happen that a true believer may not be sensible of it, because it is very possible he may not be entirely assured of his reconciliation with God ; but as it is generally otherwise ; as he ought always so to be ; and as it is his own fault if he is not, so it is always true that joy is one of those dispositions most becoming the dying Christian. It is also one of the things which most contributes to a happy death.

CHAPTER XIII.

LAST DISPOSITION. — HUMILITY.

FINALLY, the last disposition necessary to a dying person is profound humility. In fact, pride is always very ridiculous and insupportable, especially in creatures so vile, so miserable, and so criminal as are we. But it must be acknowledged, that it is never so improper as at death. In the first place, this death itself is the fruit of sin, and the fatal consequence of the loss of our innocence. "*The wages of sin is death,*"* says the Apostle; consequently death could not present itself to us without bringing our sin to remembrance: that is to say, the most humiliating of all objects. Besides, the state into which death reduces us, despoiling us of all which flatters our vanity, producing such a change upon us as to make us only objects of horror, — this state, I say, is so well calculated to abase us, that our pride must be indomitable if it be not at once annihilated. In fine, he sees himself on the point of appearing before the tribunal of God, and to render an

* Rom. vi. 23.

account of all he has done, all he has said, all he has thought from his birth to the present moment. Conscience, if it is not entirely extinguished and seared, brings before his eyes all the evil he has done, and all the good he has omitted. It thus convinces him that he merits all the severity of the divine wrath. Can pride then for a moment subsist with such a thought, and must it not be crushed by such tremendous forebodings?

We may hence infer what opinion we should form of those whose vanity still remains, and who have not only these thoughts in their hearts, but are unable to prevent them from appearing in their actions, and by their words. We see some who then indeed cannot endure the censures and reproaches of their pastors; and who, far from acknowledging their faults, far from mourning over them, and lamenting them before God and before men, excuse them, extenuate, or even deny them. We see some who give orders for their funerals, and direct that they should be celebrated with all possible magnificence. We see some who think of nothing but distinctions at a time when they should esteem themselves happy, if they could hide themselves from the penetrating eyes of divine justice which pursues them. Can we conceive a more remarkable proof of the

blindness of our mind and of the depravity of the heart? Can we conceive a conduct more foolish or absurd? Above all, can there be any thing more opposite to the dispositions most indispensable to those who wish to die in a holy and a Christian manner?

It is certain also that they are deceived in the world itself. But the conduct of those survivors cannot be sufficiently reprobated who, wishing it to appear that they are doing honor to the dead in making for them pompous and magnificent funerals, gratify only their own vanity, as well in affecting to appear so generous and grateful as in apprizing the world of the nobility and distinction of their family, by the honors they render to the departed person. I admit that this second kind of vanity is not quite so indefensible as the first; but I maintain that there is but little difference between them. It is always ostentation; that is to say, the most absurd and contemptible of all vices. It is even a vanity so much more intolerable, as connected with the idea of death, at least with that of the death of others, which sufficiently warns us of our own, and which imposes on us the necessity of thinking thereon. Let us judge as we will, for myself I declare, that nothing shocks me more than the idea which is presented to my mind by pride connected with the thought

of death. These two ideas, when suggested in combination, form a composition which appears to me intolerable.

I would desire to see Christians then, always humble and modest; but I would have them so in every thing which has any connexion with death, — as well their own as that of another. I would desire that this object should ever produce its natural effect, which is certainly to humble us. I would desire that it might make us remember what we are, and what we are about to be. This is what would be very proper, and could not fail to be salutary.

CHAPTER XIV.

THAT A HAPPY DEATH IS MUCH MORE RARE THAN IS
GENERALLY IMAGINED.

SUCH are briefly the dispositions and feelings which are necessary to a happy death. By this it is evident that nothing is more true than what I remarked in the commencement of this book, — that a happy death is a privilege as rare as it is excellent. In fact, among so many as are daily removed by death, there are few who can be said to die in this manner. There are few, comparatively, who before they die, have become reconciled to God : few who, by a sincere conversion, have passed from a state of sin to a state of grace : few who have a lively faith, and a true and sincere love for God, and for their neighbor.

That we may be more fully convinced of this, we have only to consider how prodigious is the number of those who die in their sins, as speaks our Saviour to the Jews. This will more plainly appear if we consider the different descriptions of character in society, and that there is not one of these that does not comprehend in it a vast multitude.

The first is of those who die in actual sin. Such are they who die murmuring against God ; or even they who are unwilling to submit to his righteous dispensation in removing them from the world. They who perish in unjust and criminal enterprises : they who fall in private combat : they who commit suicide : and many others who will not cease to sin till they cease to live.

The second description is of those who, never having belonged to the number of God's children, and having lived, some in profaneness, others in hypocrisy, and the most of them in the indulgence of one or more habitual sins, from which they have never been truly delivered by a sincere conversion, are cut off by unforeseen accidents, which allow them not a moment for reflection, or by diseases attended by symptoms which deprive them of the free use of their reason, and consequently prevent their seeking reconciliation with God.

The third description is of those who, having lived in the same manner as the preceding, and seeing death approach, and enjoying the full and free exercise of their reasonable faculties, with all the advantages of those means of grace and instruction which might promote their conversion, pay no attention to this great concern, or apply themselves to it only feebly and indifferently,

giving almost all their thoughts to the pain they suffer, or to the remedies which they imagine may mitigate their sufferings, to their temporal affairs, or to other objects of a similar kind.

The fourth is of those who, though applying themselves with care, bestow not a sufficiency of thought upon it, and carry it not to the desirable result of a true and sincere conversion, which transfers them from a state of sin and condemnation, to a state of justification and grace. These without doubt, compose a very great number, and may be divided into several classes.

The first is of those who, far from repenting of some of their greatest sins, are ignorant of them, and have no idea that they have ever committed such. These are generally idolaters, persecutors, the proud, the envious, liars, the malicious; among whom it is extremely rare to find any who do not consider themselves exempt from all these faults, although they are at the same time not only subject to them, but carry them to their greatest excess.* Insensible to their great trans-

* "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.*" — How many are there in this land of Bibles and of gospel light who shut their eyes against the brightest beams of truth where their own characters are concerned! They idolize and pursue wealth as their chief good, and call it only a prudent concern for themselves and families. They are

gression, how are they to repent of it? And without repentance, how are they to obtain pardon? How can they then die in the favor and love of God?

The second is of those who do not sincerely renounce certain sins of which they cannot doubt themselves to be guilty, but remain in them till their last moments. For instance, they have particular enemies, and they cannot resolve to forgive them; or if they think of so doing, the forgiveness consists in not doing or wishing them any harm without entertaining for them a true and sincere affection. They have ruined the reputation of their neighbor by calumny, and they care not to restore it by a confession of the truth. They have defrauded him of his property, and they die without a restitution of it.

The third is of those who, doing all I have described, forgiving their enemies, wishing them every good, and offering them every satisfaction, repairing the injuries they have done, and the prejudices they have occasioned, do all this only

ambitious and think they are only patriotic: they are selfish, and give little or nothing to benevolent or charitable objects, yet esteem themselves prudent and judicious. They can notice the sins of others; their own are covered from their view by a thick impenetrable veil. "*Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me, O LORD, from my secret faults.*"

from a servile fear, and a single idea of escaping hell, without the love of God entering the least into their consideration. These are not his children, they are slaves and mercenaries.

The fourth is of those who, having *some* love for God, have not sufficient to induce them to a paramount love for him. They have various attachments for the things of time and sense, which they cannot relinquish, and which are stronger than their desire to please and serve God. For instance, if they must commit a known sin in order to avoid death for a few years, or to recover their health, they will not hesitate to do it. They love life and health, then, more than they love God : they fear death more than sin. They are not, therefore, the children of God, they are always the slaves of vice.

The last is of those whose conversion appears to have been sincere, and who nevertheless are so disposed, that if recovered from their sickness they would fall again into sin, and engage again in their most criminal habits. Such sorts of conversion are by no means uncommon. Constant examples are presented of persons who exhibit some signs of penitence in sickness which they consider as mortal ; but when they recover, entirely forget it. When they think they shall certainly die, they sigh, they groan, they implore the

mercy of God with all possible demonstrations of sincere repentance. Nevertheless, all this vanishes with their danger, and their strength is no sooner restored than they appear as absolutely subject to the tyranny of sin as ever. Had they died, their conversion might have been considered sincere, and we should have had no doubt but that they had died "*in the LORD.*" Yet the event teaches us the contrary. Why should we not suspect the same thing of those who give no better proofs of the sincerity of their repentance? What reason have we for not believing, that among those who are not converted till the hour of death, there are many who are converted no otherwise than this, and who must consequently perish in their sins. Behold then, the various descriptions of dying persons who depart in sin. There is not one of these descriptions that does not comprehend multitudes of deluded people. This is incontestible. How prodigious then must be the combined amount of all, and how greatly does it exceed the number of those who are saved from such fatal delusion.

It has been judged by some that one only of the above classes is incomparably more numerous than that of all the children of God, and heirs of his heavenly kingdom. For instance, they who having done injustice, have failed to repair it in

life or at death, form but a portion of one of these classes; and yet how great is the number of such! What is there more common than this sin? What is more rare than reparation? Let each of my readers judge for himself according to knowledge; a momentary consideration only of this truth is appalling. How few even shall we find of dying persons who would not be ready to commit a known sin if this only was needed to restore them to health. I might say the same of other descriptions; but as this can be plainly perceived, I shall not here give it a farther attention. It may be sufficient to add, that there is hardly any subject which affords greater occasion to tremble for ourselves, or to lament for others, than this consideration suggests.

THE
DEATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS:
OR
THE WAY OF HOLY DYING.

Book II.

WHAT WE SHOULD DO IN HEALTH TO PREPARE FOR A HAPPY
DEATH.

"HAST never seen a death-bed, never heard
A dying groan? Men saw it often. 'T was sad,
To all most sorrowful and sad; to guilt,
'T was anguish, terror, darkness, without bow.
But, oh! it had a most convincing tongue,
A potent oratory, that secured
Most mute attention; and it spoke the truth
So boldly, plainly, perfectly distinct,
That none the meaning could mistake or doubt;
And had withal a disenchanting power,
A most omnipotent and wondrous power,
Which in a moment broke, for ever broke,
And utterly dissolved, the charms, and spells,
And cunning sorceries of earth and hell." — *Pollok*.

THE
DEATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

CHAPTER I.

THAT THERE IS NOTHING WHICH SO MUCH CONCERNS US AS
OUR SALVATION.

THE preceding book has sufficiently explained to us what it is to die well : it only now remains to be shown in what way we may be employed to secure to ourselves such an advantage. This is the point of greatest importance, which we shall here undertake to illustrate, and in the succeeding books.

Two things are necessary if we would prepare for a happy death. The one is to desire it most ardently and seriously. The other, to labor for it with all our might. The reason for which is, as we shall see in the sequel, that it is not to be done without difficulty. Great efforts, vigorous conflict, and steady perseverance are necessary. We cannot succeed but by dint of labor and application ; and both this labor and application

presuppose a violent, and a firm, constant, and determined resolution.

We shall not fail to have such a resolution if we pay attention to two things. The one is, that nothing concerns us so much as our salvation. The other is, that our salvation depends upon the manner in which we live and die. The illustration of these two important points can hardly fail to make us anxious that we may die the death of the righteous. If, persuaded of these truths, we should take no pains to inform ourselves of the manner in which we should die ; we would hereby manifest an indifference to our happiness, and would consent to be eternally miserable. Happiness and misery would thus seem to be in our view of things, indifferent and undistinguishable one from another, or which would require that we should prefer the former to the latter ; which would be a conclusion so plainly at variance with all the conclusions of reason, and the most natural desires of the heart, that I cannot but consider it absolutely impossible.

But how, on the other hand, can either of these truths be doubted, if we have the slightest persuasion of the verities which religion teaches us ? Particularly, how can we know what salvation is, and suppose that it concerns us not to be saved ? It is certain also, that none can doubt the necessity

of salvation. The great evil is, that we do not give this subject sufficient consideration. To prove this would be unnecessary; or to adduce more powerful evidence of a truth in itself so palpable. All that is necessary is, that we should endeavor to feel it so that it may suitably impress the heart. To which purpose the following Meditation may be in some degree conducive.

MEDITATION.

I have often considered the conduct of my neighbors, and made reflections upon them to penetrate the reasons of their actions: but O my God, have I well considered my own? and among all the occasions of surprise that strike my attention, is there any greater than that which my own life daily affords? I have but one great concern, which should engross my constant attention, and yet I seldom bestow on it a serious thought. I labor in it still less than I think of it; and my life, which should be occupied in this alone, and which only with this view should appear too short for me, is devoted almost entirely to other things, and is consumed amid a thousand vain and useless amusements.

In what light can I consider my salvation, without acknowledging that it is the first and the

greatest of all my interests; or more properly speaking, my only true interest? Every thing else depends upon this; happiness, pleasure, ease, contentment, honor, glory, every thing that can be desirable and advantageous. If I fail in this one concern, all others without exception are lost to me. There will remain nothing to me but the existence of this miserable nature, the total loss and annihilation of which would be a comparative blessing, so great otherwise would be the future evils which would accumulate upon and overwhelm me.

Yes, if I fail in this great concern of my salvation, every thing that now engages me, or more properly speaking, all those things which at present I idolize, all that appears so charming in the world which I worship, all this is lost to me, for ever lost; and eternity, immense and incomprehensible as is its never-ending duration, shall by no revolution of its boundless ages for one moment restore my forfeited blessings.

But there is a consideration of still greater moment than this. If I fail in this great concern, I lose infinitely more than all that; I lose God, whom I may possess, and who may be my portion and my inheritance. Yes, O my God, if I am so unhappy as to ruin myself, I lose thee eternally: I shall lose the exhaustless treasure of thy essence;

I shall lose the fulness of joy ; I shall lose those unspeakable consolations which are inseparable from thy presence. Could the whole universe indemnify me for such a loss ? What will be then my despair if in losing thee I find there remains for me absolutely nothing ! If it were possible to combine in myself all the strength and activity of the whole human race, if it were possible to combine all the time they had severally lived, and hence to form a life from the result of such a multiplication, all the years, hours, and moments of such a life, all the cares I could bestow upon it, all the efforts I could make, would not equal, as regards myself, the importance of this one sole concern, and would not be purchasing success in such an affair at too dear a rate.

But why should not this affair appear to me in all its great importance, with regard to myself, when I consider that it so appears to all intelligent creatures, both in the world and out of the world, to God, to angels and to devils ? Devils neglect no arts by which they may oppose it. Angels labor to promote its success. God himself, if I may so speak, is occupied with it in time and through eternity.

The design of these labors have occasioned those adorable resolutions which, among so many incomprehensible mysteries as they disclose, con-

tain none more astonishing, than that so vile and sinful a creature as myself should be the object of them. The incarnation of my Redeemer, his humble birth, his painful and sorrowful life, his "*bitter passion and precious death*," all these were means directed to that of which my salvation was the end : all this was resolved upon, executed, employed for my salvation. Shall I alone be uninterested ? I, who have more interest therein than any one beside ? If I should succeed in every other design and fail in this alone, what can I do ? What can I gain ? On the contrary, if I fail in every thing else, and succeed in this alone, what do I lose ? It is not necessary that I should succeed in this law-suit ; that I should be promoted to that honor ; that I should prosper in that enterprise : it is not even necessary that I should live. But it is absolutely necessary that I should be saved. This necessity alone is indispensable : this alone is of infinite moment : all the others may be considered as comparatively of secondary importance, and may without real injury be neglected. And yet how is it that this should be the only thing that I do neglect ? I am diligent and eager for a hundred other things, which I dare not place in comparison with this ; and which, in fact, are not worthy to be named with it. I am careless concerning this alone,

which should occupy me day and night, and keep me incessantly employed.

If the importance of this great concern were a thing of which I was ignorant, it would be proper that I should examine the nature of such an ignorance before I could avail myself of it as an excuse for my conduct. But can I avoid entering into the discussion of such a question? I know, I am convinced, that nothing is more true than what I have just said; there is not the least doubt of it remaining on my mind. Where, then, can I find excuses to justify me before God, and to satisfy myself? I may search for them, but I cannot find them: indeed, there is no excuse, the vanity and falsehood of which would not at once appear by the consideration of the interest which I have neglected. But if there be no excuse which can either justify or color my conduct, may there not be some secret source from whence it may arise? There are, no doubt, many of these; but none which does not afford occasion for shame and humiliation. I neglect my salvation because I have so many other concerns which require my attention. But what are these other things which occupy me? Are they necessary? Are they of the same great importance as my salvation? It would be unreasonable so to consider them. Why then should this excuse interfere to hinder me

from taking the necessary steps toward my salvation? I do nothing for eternity, because all my labors are bestowed on the things of time. But is time in any sense comparable with eternity? Can I prefer the momentary enjoyment of an imaginary felicity to the possession of a bliss very real and true, for an endless duration? If I apply myself to my salvation, and in order to succeed in it neglect earthly things, some ignorant persons may deride and despise me. But have I any reason to regard the esteem or approbation of such people? What benefit shall I derive from their esteem or approbation? What harm shall I apprehend from their contempt and derision? I neglect my salvation, because it consists in things which strike none of my senses: I see not, I taste not, I touch not the blessings which God has prepared for me in his heavenly kingdom. But of what concern is it to me that I see them not, if I only believe and am persuaded of them? Am I not constantly directed by knowledge, which is conveyed to me otherwise than through sensible means? When I sow my field, do I see the harvest which in due season I shall reap? When I take a remedy, do I see the effect which will result from it? Is it not sufficient that my reason teaches me this? Why should I find any difficulty then, in calculating upon faith, which is

incomparably a surer guide than reason? I neglect my salvation because the cares I am obliged to bestow on it, are by no means agreeable. There is something in them bitter and disgusting to degenerate nature. But should I not reflect, that the loss of this salvation would be altogether more grievous and distressing than the pains I should take to secure it? And besides, do I not for mere temporal interests, submit to suffer and do many things as repugnant to my feelings, as those I should suffer or do for my eternal safety?

Finally, I neglect my salvation because I do not sufficiently desire to be saved. There are many other things which I have more at heart than this. But do I not thus evince a deplorable blindness and depravity? For what is so worthy of my most ardent desires as the salvation of my soul? I am hence forcibly convinced of the incorrectness of my reasonings, and of the madness of my conduct. But if such is the case, how does it happen that I make no alteration in them? How does it happen that I continue daily to live as I have done? How does it happen, that at the very moment I am making these reflections, and that they appear to me so substantial, I do not break off absolutely from all these attachments to the things of sense, which give me the principal occasion to condemn my actions?

It is strange, that so well knowing my duty, I should have so little strength and resolution to perform it. This reflection should humble me, and make me feel all my misery, but it should not lead me utterly to despair. That strength which I require, and which I could never of myself obtain, can be communicated to me by a supernatural power, which may act in me, and independently of me, and of all created power. Yes, holy and blessed Spirit, giver of all spiritual grace, repairer of all the disorders and infirmities of my nature, thou canst strengthen me, and enable me to perform the most difficult duties: thou canst detach my heart from earth and its fascinating advantages: thou canst give me a decided disgust and contempt of them: thou canst fill me with love for my God, and canst make me gasp with as much ardor for that celestial source of joy, as I have heretofore panted for the objects of time and sense. And shall such a work be too great for thee, who hast so often thus displayed thy grace in the hearts which thou hast sanctified and consecrated to be temples of thine infinite majesty? But on the other hand, if thou canst produce in me so great a miracle of grace, wilt thou refuse the humble petition which I offer to thee for it? As thou givest me “to perceive and know what things I ought to do,” wilt thou not

“grant me grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same?” Thou art a spirit of power and love: thou art moreover a seal by which all thy divine perfections are impressed upon the hearts of all faithful people. Communicate both of these to me in such measure as may please thy holy will. Give me to love my duties. Give me grace to perform them, since I cannot suitably perform them without this love, nor love them without endeavoring faithfully to fulfil them.

CHAPTER II.

THAT OUR SALVATION DEPENDS UPON THE STATE IN WHICH
WE DIE.

A HAPPY death is of such importance as to involve in it our salvation: in fact, our salvation depends solely upon the state in which we die. If we die in a holy and Christian manner, it is certain and infallible, that in a moment after we shall be fully and perfectly happy; and that heaven contains no crowns, riches, or pleasures, which we shall not possess without fear of being deprived of them: and on the contrary, that if we die with evil dispositions, we are irreparably, eternally lost; and hell contains no punishments which we shall not eternally endure. Other faults which may be committed are easily repaired: sin itself, the greatest, the grossest, and the most fatal of all faults, is effaced by the atoning merits of the Saviour, on repentance and faith in him, and the efficacy of this atonement, thus applied to the soul, is such, that although the past is not changed, yet the sins are blotted out and remembered no more. “*In those days,*” says the Prophet, “*the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there*

shall be none: and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found, for I will pardon them." (Jer. l. 20.)

It is not thus in the case of the wicked who die. Here is an irreparable fault, and an evil absolutely without remedy, which arises from two principal sources. The first is, that we die but once. If it were otherwise, we might repair at the second or the third decease, what was deficient in the first. But this can never occur; each one of us has but one death to suffer; consequently, if that one is miserable, it is an irreparable fault. This is what occasions the despair which reigns in hell. The victims of sin earnestly desire to return into the world, that they may live and die at least once more, and that they may repair in this second life and this second death the faults they have committed in the first. But this is a vain and useless wish. The same law which subjects us to death subjects us to it but once. "*It is appointed unto men once to die.*" (Heb. ix. 27.)

The second reason why there is no remedy for a bad death is, that every thing which follows, of whatever nature it may be, is absolutely useless. Repentance, tears, prayers, all that here may be done most salutary and useful, is of no possible avail in the life to come. God has given this life as the only period of probation. If a moment

before it is terminated we repent holily, his grace is assured to us, as I hope to show in the sequel; but if we delay repentance until this life is extinguished, the repentance, however brief and sincere it may be, will avail us nothing. I cannot but be persuaded to think, that the moment the wicked are called to the judgment-seat of CHRIST, seeing on the one hand the abyss of wo into which they are about to be plunged, and on the other, the magnitude of the crimes which have brought upon them this misery, they will be filled with indescribable terror and grief, and with cruel self-reproach will ardently desire that they had led a better life.

Thus eternal wisdom premonishes the sinner in the first chapter of the book of Proverbs, — “*Because I have called and ye refused; I have stretched forth my hand, and no man regarded: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer: they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.*”* “Strive,” says our Saviour, “to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up and hath shut to the door, and

* Prov. i. 24-28.

ye begin to stand without and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, lord, open unto us, and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are."* This being then an irreparable evil, every precaution should be taken by which it may be avoided: and in proportion as we are firmly assured that he who dies in his sins is thus irreparably lost; so in proportion as we are assured that a person dies in a holy and a Christian manner, have we nothing to fear, and on the contrary, every thing to hope. Deeply, then, as it concerns us to avoid hell, and to possess heaven and its glory; and deeply as it concerns us to shun the last and extreme misery, and to possess the most perfect felicity, so does it concern us to die well. It imports but little whether we die in glory or in wealth. It is of small importance to be praised or to be regretted after we are dead. It concerns us little that we are buried in pomp and splendor: that monuments of fame are erected to our memory, and inscribed with the history of our virtues. But it infinitely concerns us to die well, because in fact upon that little moment hangs the character of our eternal state.†

* Luke xiii. 24, 25.

† People talk as if the act of death made a complete change in the nature, as well as in the condition of man. Death is the vehicle to another state of being, but possesses no power

PRAYER.

It is of thy goodness, O God, that I have received the gift of existence, and have been placed by thy wisdom in this world. But I consider it as a far greater blessing, and as incomparably a more necessary and precious favor, that I should leave it by a good and happy death. Without this second favor, the first would have not only proved useless to me, it would have been most disastrous; so much so, that it would

to qualify us for that state. In conveying us to a new world, it does not give us a new heart: it puts the unalterable stamp of decision on the character, but does not transform it into a character diametrically opposite. The extricated spirit will be separated from the feculence of all that belongs to sin, to sense, and to self. We shall indeed find ourselves new, because spiritualized beings; but if the cast of the mind were not in a great measure the same, how should we retain our identity? The soul will there become that which it here desired to be — that which it mourned, because it was so far from being. It will have obtained that complete victory over its corruptions which it here only desired, — which it here only struggled to obtain.

We may then fairly arrive at this conclusion, — that there is no *happy death* but that which conducts to a *happy immortality*: no joy in putting off the body if we have not put on the LORD JESUS CHRIST: no consolation in escaping from the miseries of time, till we have obtained a well-grounded hope of a blessed eternity. — *Miss H. More on Happy Deaths.*

have been better that I had never been born, than having been born, to live only to offend thee, and to sink into endless perdition. Hence while I thank thee, that by a miracle of thy power thou hast created me, with my whole heart I beseech thee, that when in thine appointed time thou shalt see fit to take again the life which thou hast given, it may please thee to inspire me with all those thoughts, and to impart all those dispositions, which are requisite to make me meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Dispose of me as to every thing else, as it may please thee. Grant me or refuse me temporal benefits according as thy wisdom and thy goodness may judge most convenient for me. But however this may be, LORD grant me to die in thy love, and that I may be separated from this mortal body only to be united with thee, who art the fountain of life. Delay not to afford me thine aid until that last moment, when it shall be absolutely necessary; but now grant me thine help, even from this very moment; grant me promptly all the blessings which then I shall need: and as there is no moment in which I may not die, so also grant there may be none in which I shall be found deficient in those things which are necessary, to die in thy grace and to reign in thy glory. Grant this, O Father, for JESUS CHRIST our Lord's sake.

CHAPTER III.

THAT WE SHOULD NEGLECT NOTHING WHICH MAY ENABLE US
TO DIE IN A HOLY AND CHRISTIAN MANNER.

THE preceding chapter presented to us truths which none but an atheist could well deny. But if they are thus generally admitted, can we resist the conviction, that it is our sacred duty to use all possible means, that we may die in the favor and love of God? Can we neglect an interest so great as that of our salvation? and can our self-love consent to that which would expose us gratuitously to eternal perdition?

This duty may be violated in three different ways. First, by a fixed resolution to perish. Second, by doing absolutely nothing for our salvation. Third, by doing something with this design, but not doing all that is necessary.

The first of these three extremes I conceive to be impossible. One must hate himself to make so horrible a resolution; and this is a thing too much opposed to the natural constitution of the heart to believe that it can ever exist. The second is possible, though scarcely less unreasonable than the first: for what can we imagine less reasonable

or more absurd than to propose to one's self an object, and to do nothing toward the obtaining of it? Is not this to act in contrariety to the most common dictates of good sense?

This second is also comparatively rare; and it is only to a class of persons distinguished for their profanity, that this reproach will be found to apply. It is the third which is far more common. As it has been already remarked, the generality of men make some exertion to be saved, but small is the number of those who do all that occasion requires to succeed in this important work. Yet can we think of any thing less wise than such a course? It is still more absurd than the second. To do nothing to be saved is, I admit, a terrible madness. It is gratuitously to surrender the greatest blessing in the world. But to do only part of what we should toward so important an object, is, in my view of it, still more indefensible. It is, on the one hand, to lose the great blessing which it was in our power to obtain; and on the other, to lose the labor which has been bestowed for its acquisition. It is, on the one hand, to place one's self beyond the possibility of success; and in the next, to labor unprofitably. It is certain, then, that if we have, I will not say piety, but only good sense, we should do all that is absolutely and indispens-

ably necessary for salvation. But this is not all. Good sense would teach us to do whatever might be necessary, not only to be saved, but also to have a well assured hope of salvation, and to place one's self out of danger of losing it. The reason is, that so great is this interest, that it is impossible that it should be allowed, I will not say to renounce it, I will not say to neglect it, but even to place it in jeopardy. Now surely it is exposing it to imminent hazard, when we content ourselves with the simple possibility of acquiring it, which has nothing inconsistent with an equal possibility of losing it. Would prudence justify such a course in things of great magnitude and importance? Would we not take pains to be as well assured as possible of life, honor, reputation and fortune? And do not they who pass for the wise and judicious of the earth, take all the precautions in this respect that are possible, without even excepting those which appear the least necessary? Can we, notwithstanding, then admit that any of these interests should be placed in comparison with our eternal salvation?

Thus salvation depending so absolutely on the state in which we die, it is evident that all the pains we can take to prepare ourselves for this event, are absolutely necessary, and that there is none which we may be allowed to neglect.

Let it not be said that these labors are difficult or disagreeable. Let it not be alleged that they render our life sad and burthensome. Admit this to be the case; — of what weight is such a consideration, if we do not show that these inconveniences can equal and outweigh the great hazard we run by refusing subjection to God's holy laws? Can we, however, make such a supposition, I will not say with truth, but with any shadow of probability? for finally these inconveniences are extremely limited, while the blessing at hazard is absolutely infinite. We are permitted then to neglect nothing which would conduce to our success in this great concern, and here is the ground-work of all that remains to be said in the following pages.

But it may be inquired, What is to be done for such a consummation? I reply, there are cares of two descriptions which we owe to the business of salvation. The first comprehend those which should occupy us in health, and when we are apparently out of all danger. The second comprise those which belong to sickness and approaching death. I shall attend to the first of these in the remainder of this book, and reserve a consideration of the other to the two following.

PRAYER.

What is there that I dare neglect, O gracious God, among the means which thou hast afforded me to attain the possession of thyself, the greatest good? To what efforts should not such a glorious hope incite me? But on the other hand, what can I do without thine Almighty aid? The weakness, or more properly speaking, the absolute impotence which I feel, and of which I have so many melancholy proofs, is not unknown to thee. However instructed I may be by thy word and by my own experience, thou knowest me better than I know myself, and there is nothing hid from thine all-seeing eye. There is nothing, O my God, over which thy grace and thy power do not prevail. Work in me and by me that which I can never of myself perform; enlighten me by thine instruction; guide me by thy spirit; sustain and strengthen me by thy grace; grant that understanding what I ought to do not to lose thee, my heavenly and eternal portion, I may be careful to practise my duty in all the course of my succeeding life, directing my actions, my words and my thoughts to this great end, so worthy of being their final object. In a word, O LORD, since thou hast loved me and given thyself for me, deny me not those things which will be needful for my

ultimate success; that thus thine may be all the glory, and that thou mayest be equally the author of the commencement, of the progress, and of the consummation of this work of grace. Grant this, O heavenly Father, for the sake of thy Son, our Saviour **JESUS CHRIST.**

CHAPTER IV.

THAT WE SHOULD COMMENCE IN SEASON THE PREPARATION
FOR DEATH.

WHAT I have just said is so evident, that without presumption it may be considered incontestible. There is none who will not freely admit, that as it concerns him to die well: so it becomes him to neglect nothing which may enable him to attain this object. But if such be the case, perhaps it may be said, How comes it to be so much neglected; and that so few take the pains which all are willing to admit are necessary?

It is not difficult to discover the cause of this inconsistency. We are persuaded that we should labor in this important concern; we desire to engage in the work; but we are disposed to delay it as long as possible. We will devote our life and health to business, to diversion, to pleasure; and we propose to think of death in old age, in sickness, in our last moments, or at some future time, whatever this may be, whether specified or undetermined. This is considered sufficient, and that the care we should bestow upon our salvation obliges us to do nothing more. Thus we are

satisfied, and life passes without improving those great advantages it offers in attending to this great concern.

I shall not detain my reader by inquiring whether such a course is consistent with the maxims of piety, or with the ordinary decisions of a sound judgment. Suffice it to say, it is wholly at variance with what has been proposed in the preceding chapters. I have shown that our salvation depends wholly upon the state in which we die. I have shown that if we die without those dispositions which are necessary to a happy death, we are inevitably lost, and sink into an abyss of wo from which there is no recovery. If we are conscious that we do not realize these dispositions, and that dying in such a state our departure would be unhappy in the highest degree, can we, without the imputation of stupidity and imprudence in the highest degree, lose a moment in escaping so frightful a calamity, particularly as we are not sure that much more time or opportunity remains for us? For if it be equally possible that we may have this time and opportunity, and that we may not have them, is it not to neglect our salvation in the most dangerous manner when we defer for to-morrow what should be done to-day?

It is also true, that it is at least equally possible, that we may be deprived of our time and opportunity, as that we may enjoy them. It is very possible that the time we allot to prepare for death may never arrive: we intend to labor in old age, and perhaps we die in youth. We consider it sufficient time to prepare for death in the sickness that may precede our death; and perhaps we die without sickness, we are removed by a sudden and unexpected accident.

Besides, how many things are absolutely necessary in preparation for death, and in which we may be very probably deficient? How, for instance, can we bestow any attention to this important business without the free exercise of our reason? And who can be assured that he shall retain this faculty? How many are the accidents which may deprive us of it! How many the diseases which entirely or partially destroy it! Can we prepare for death without supernatural grace, and the special aid of the Holy Spirit? and can we promise ourselves this grace and this aid, when we refuse to receive them until our last moments? And do we not now reject them? Are we not satisfied to live without them our whole lifetime? and does such a state of mind give us promise that we shall obtain them at death? Who can have so great

an occasion to fear being forsaken of God at their last moments, as they who, during their life, have so often suppressed the motions of God's grace in the soul, and obstinately refused to obey him? In fact, to be unwilling to prepare for death is to be unwilling to be converted, there being nothing but conversion which is absolutely and universally necessary to die in the favor and love of God. And not to desire conversion, but on the contrary to persist in the practice of vice, is not this the most fatal of all dispositions? Is it not the height of impiety? Is it not the most subtle and efficient of those causes which finally produce hardness of heart, that frightful state from which it is difficult if not impossible to recover? But I would desire to protect my reader from all these dangers. It cannot be denied that the time generally selected for this preparation is far from being the most suitable. The longer this preparation is delayed, the less prospect is there of success; because, in fact, the bad habits which it is necessary to relinquish are daily taking root, and become in time more powerful, and more difficult to conquer. Like a disease long neglected, they become incurable. But besides this general consideration, it is certain that old age and disease themselves present very serious obstacles to this important

undertaking, and render its success extremely difficult.

It requires but little observation to remark, that old age in general produces very frequently as sad effects upon the heart as upon the body and upon the mind. We find the aged fretful, passionate, boasters, and proud; more interested in the world and attached to it, than they were at an age less advanced. Finally, they contract a hardness of heart directly opposed to devotion, and to all those ardent, tender and delicate emotions which it inspires for every thing that concerns the service of God and the salvation of the soul. I say not that such is uniformly the case; I have no reason to suppose it; but that such is the fact in ordinary cases will scarcely admit a doubt.

This being premised, I ask whether we could possibly select a more unsuitable season for the important work of preparation for death? We must for this purpose, excite thoroughly in our hearts whatever holy emotions piety can give birth to. The holy desires of the soul are to be excited to ardent exercise; and we choose for this work a season when they are generally very feeble and very languid, even in those who have exercised them with the utmost care during the

whole course of their lives. Could we possibly act in a more injudicious manner?

I say the same thing of sickness. 'This is a season least proper for cares like this. The weakness of the body is communicated to the mind, and renders it incapable of any effort. Pain and other symptoms engage and absorb its activity. The desire of recovery entirely engrosses it. The thoughts of earth, and of the various associations of former days, importunately press upon the mind, and occasion a thousand distractions to its peace. In a word, we cannot imagine a season less proper for this great work, which requires such an exertion of all the most important energies of the soul. The better course is, then, to labor in season, and not to lose a moment in commencing the important work. But this is so evident that we require not so much conviction of its truth, as deep impression of its importance. For which purpose the following meditation may be useful.

MEDITATION.

Not a moment has elapsed since the day of my birth, in which it might not have pleased God to call me from the present life. Many causes which I know, and doubtless many others of which I am

ignorant, might have conspired to produce this effect. This is certain, and I cannot doubt it. Nevertheless, were there any of those moments, in any one of which I might have died without the fear of perdition? Had I in all of them those dispositions which are necessary in order to die the death of the righteous? Had I repentance, faith, charity, and the other virtues, without which we cannot fail to be objects of the wrath of God, as well in life as in death?

I have passed a very considerable portion of time in a criminal inactivity. I have often fallen into particular and gross faults, and have neglected at the same time to ask pardon of God. When I have prayed to him, it has not been with that penitence and earnestness necessary to obtain it. Moreover, when I review the greater portion of my life past, how little of it is there in which I have not been engaged in habitual sin! If from my life were deducted all the time during which I have lived in resentment, hatred, or animosity against some of my brethren; all the time during which I have unjustly retained the property which belonged to him; all the time, in one word, in which I have entertained unlawful attachments to sensible advantages, being always ready to sacrifice to them both my salvation and my conscience by known and deliberate sins, how little of it

would then remain ! If I had died in such a state, where would I have been at this moment ? I must have been consigned to a state of punishment in hell if God had thus “ *dealt with me after my sins.* ” This is a certain unquestionable truth.

Under what obligations, then, am I not placed to the infinite goodness of my Creator, in having averted by his providence what might have so easily and justly happened ? The same favor has not been extended to many of my acquaintance, to whom I dare not consider myself as superior. I have been a spectator of their death. I have seen them taken away by disease or unexpected accidents, while I still am spared. Can I too highly appreciate this favor of my God ?

But of what avail to me will this be, if I take not the proper steps to avoid the danger which I have hitherto incurred ? As I might have died in any one of the moments of my past life, so I may die in the present, and in any of those that succeed. There is not one which might not be the moment in which my Master cometh. Should I not then endeavor by God’s grace that he may find me always watching, always ready to receive him ? Should I not seek to attain a state of peace and reconciliation with God ; take all possible methods to assure myself that I truly enjoy so great a blessing, and use all possible precaution

to avoid whatever would deprive me of it? In a word, should I not wholly break off from sin, and renouncing the love of created things, devote myself to God, studying to serve him in true holiness and righteousness all the days of my life? I plainly perceive what it is that weakens in my heart the resolution I have made, and might hinder the execution of it; — it is the attachment I have for the things of sense: it is the reluctance with which I part from them: it is the vain and false hope that flatters the flesh of reconciling the interests of earth and heaven, both in assigning the present to the first, and the future to the second, and in laboring alternately for the one and the other. But can I suffer myself to be seduced by such gross illusions? Can I in the first place balance the interests of this life with those of the life to come? How great would be my blindness if the desire to gain the world will lead me to lose my soul; and if for a momentary satisfaction I expose myself to the danger of being miserable through the vast duration of eternity.

On the other hand, if I give all the present to the world, can I be assured that there will remain for me a future, during which I can labor for heaven? If this future, which I promise to myself, comes not; if death removes this also from me when it removes me from the earth, what will

avail me all the cares I have bestowed on other objects? Finally, how can I suppose that a time so brief as that which may remain for me to live on earth can be sufficient for me to secure both my worldly aggrandizement and open for me the gate of heaven? Hardly can it suffice for only one of these designs: but to labor for both at once is a sure method to succeed in neither. If, then, I am convinced in my own mind, as indeed I cannot doubt that nothing concerns me so much as my soul's eternal salvation, that this is my greatest and most important interest, indeed, my only essential interest, and that all others vanish into insignificance when compared with this, can I allow myself to be exposed to the least danger; and can I refuse it any effort of which I am capable, or any of those precious moments which the divine mercy may still afford me?

This, then, is my great and important business; this is the single legitimate object of my supreme attention. To this should I apply myself with all my strength; happy indeed if thus laboring I may hope to succeed. But who am I, to speak of power or strength, who cannot be ignorant of my frailty and impotence? I, who am so sensible of my incapacity for the smallest things; who, far from being able of myself to perform good actions, find myself unable even to think a good thought!

A conviction of this would cast me into utter despair, O my God, if I did not know that thy strength could be perfected even in my weakness. I am capable of nothing, this is a certain fact; but thou canst make me capable of every thing. With thine assistance and support I can accomplish that which I should in vain expect of myself to perform. But this is not all: thou hast not only sufficient power to supply my inability, but thou hast moreover sufficient goodness not to refuse employing it in favor of those who, distrusting their own strength, place their confidence only in thee. Here is my only resource, O my God! this is what preserves me from utter dejection. I trust thou wilt grant this help which is necessary to me, and which I supplicate with my whole heart. Delay not thy help, O my God, until the closing period of my life. Make me to realize from this very moment the salutary efficacy of thy good spirit. Take from me that unhappy propensity I have for the perishable advantages of this world. Give me to sigh only for those of heaven, or rather for thee, who art the only treasure which can truly enrich me. Give me thy grace to love thee supremely; and above all, to consecrate unreservedly to thee every emotion of my heart, which being made only for thee, cannot without degradation attach itself to any object

inferior to thee. Take thou possession of this heart, O God, and disdain not to raise it to thy throne, and so subject all its emotions to thyself that none may ever again arise which may not be conformable to thy will, and which tend not to the promotion of thy glory. In a word, LORD, so dispose every event that I may live in thy fear, and that I may die in thy favor and in thy love.

CHAPTER V.

TO DIE WELL, WE SHOULD WITHOUT DELAY IMPORE OF GOD
THE FAVOR OF A HAPPY DEATH.

It appears from what has been said, that there is neither time to be lost, nor pains to be neglected in the preparations which are necessary to a happy death. But what is to be done to effect this important purpose? The proper and efficacious means of success are not wanting. There are many that the divine mercy has given us, and that his word unfolds to us. Each of these means has its peculiar efficacy; but it is certain that we should not be satisfied with employing only one or two of them; we must employ them all, and by such a combination we shall render them not only useful, but infallible.

The first consists in imploring of God all the help necessary to enable us to die well. I presuppose, in fact, as I have already suggested, that the dispositions and emotions of the heart and mind which are most essential for this purpose are not the works of nature, but the effects and productions of grace. It is true they comprehend all that is most admirable and sublime in piety, and

we know this piety is the work of the Spirit. We know that of ourselves we are not able even to think a good thought. We know we can do nothing but in CHRIST JESUS, who strengthens us; and that if this great Saviour leaves us to ourselves we cannot but sin and perish. But if the divine grace is thus necessary to a happy death, who can doubt our duty to implore such an inestimable benefit? Is it not a general rule which admits of no exception, that we should ask of God that we have not, and that we wish to have? Are we ignorant of what JESUS CHRIST has said to us, "*Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you.*"* Do we forget what St. James says? "*Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss.*"† I know that very frequently God anticipates our requests and our desires, and grants us graces of which we had not even thought. But it would be great imprudence to depend upon this, and to wait till God of his special and unsolicited favor should grant this particular grace of which we speak, or any others. This divine grace is too necessary for us to admit our neglect of any means to procure it. We should endeavor to secure not only a possibility of obtaining it,

* Matt. vii. 7.

† James iv. 3.

but also an impossibility of being deprived of it. We should endeavor to assure ourselves of its possession, and there is nothing but prayer which can secure this advantage. Without this we may indeed obtain it or not obtain it; but with prayer its possession will be always infallibly obtained. We are not permitted to neglect it; and the grand interest we have to secure should oblige us strenuously and faithfully to employ all the means within our reach to obtain it, though they might be far more painful and difficult than they are. But this is so evident that I presume it will not be denied. Indeed, I can scarcely believe that there are many who entirely neglect this duty, and who never ask of God the boon of a happy death. Such a case involves an extraordinary degree of stupidity and profanity. A more important reflection is, that it is not sufficient simply to ask this grace of God: we must ask him in such a manner that we may hope that he will not refuse us. To this end we must ask in the first place with profound humility; being sincerely and powerfully convinced not only that we are unworthy of it, but also that we deserve to be deprived of it, and that it only arises from the infinite goodness and mercy of God, that we are not refused our petition. We must secondly ask with fervor, earnestly desiring to obtain it; real-

izing our great necessities, and all the weight of misery which would overwhelm us if we die not in a holy and a Christian manner. Thirdly, we should not be satisfied to ask for this very needful grace only once or twice; we should repeat our request as often as possible. In fact, perseverance is one of the most essential requisites of a good prayer; and nothing can render it more efficacious than this holy importunity,* as the example of the Canaanitish woman and the parable of the unjust judge sufficiently evince. Finally, we must accompany this prayer with a holy confidence in the goodness and mercy of God; for nothing is more certain than the maxim of St. James, that we must "*ask in faith*" if we desire to obtain. And the Son of God teaches what is this faith, so necessary to render our prayers useful and efficacious, saying to his apostles, "*What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.*"† Asking in this manner, we may have perfect assurance of receiving; this grace being one which God never refuses to those who ask in the manner prescribed in his holy word. We may judge from what has been said, whether we can be excusable in neglecting so great salvation; and whether they

* French — Obstinacy.

† Mark xi. 24.

who, having refused to employ these means, and to ask of God his divine help for the last trying hour, obtain it not, and dying in their impenitency, deserve compassion; or whether, on the contrary, they are not worthy of the indignation of God, and the abhorrence of his reasonable creatures.

PRAYER.

I know, LORD, that thy grace is needful both to a good life and a happy death. I know, moreover, that the most infallible means of obtaining this grace is, to ask it with faith, with humility, and with fervency. But however persuaded I may be of my need of this favor, I am sensible that I ask not for it as I ought, with a firm and steady hope of obtaining it. Nothing is so cold, nothing so languid, as my prayers and my desires. Heal this spiritual malady, O my God! Inspire me with an ardent desire for thy grace, and for all the advantages which it is so sufficient to procure. Grant that I may regard every thing else with comparative contempt. In a word, LORD, grant me all that is needful to obtain thy grace, and consequently all those helps which I require to ask thee as I ought. Give me thy spirit of prayer, who may teach me what it is I ought to ask, and how it is I ought to ask; or rather, may

inspire the petitions I should offer, and himself explain them, making intercession for me with groanings which cannot be uttered. Grant me the first of these favors, which can procure for me all the others, and by them all that I can possibly desire. Begin thus thy good work in me. But after having commenced it, forsake it not, and cease not thy compassionate labors till thou hast brought it to perfection. Grant this, O merciful LORD, for JESUS CHRIST's sake.

CHAPTER VI.

A GOOD LIFE IS A NECESSARY PREPARATION FOR A HAPPY
DEATH.

I HAVE thus attended to the first preparation for a good death. The second is a good life. I know nothing more necessary nor more effectual than this. Without the second the first is useless; for as the blind man whom CHRIST had healed declares, "*We know that God heareth not sinners, but if any man be a worshipper of God him he heareth.*"* Hence GOD threatens his ancient people by the mouth of one of his prophets:— "*When ye spread forth your hands I will hide mine eyes from you; when ye make many prayers I will not hear; your hands are full of blood.*"†

When I speak of a good life, I do not wish to be understood as meaning merely what the world would term an honest life; simply abstaining from some gross and outward sins, which are disgusting to all who have the least sense of propriety: I understand by a good life, that it is to live in a holy and Christian manner, truly to

* John ix. 31.

† Isa. i. 15.

love and serve God ; strictly to observe the rules which his holy law prescribes to us ; to control the passions ; to mortify the flesh ; and always to conduct ourselves as the true disciples of JESUS CHRIST, as children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven.

This is what it concerns us to practise in preparation for a happy death. Three things, in fact, are principally necessary. We must be in a state of habitual reconciliation with God. We must be actually engaged in our duty until the hour of death : we must finally exercise and reduce to practice the virtues which indicate our conversion. But how can we practise any of these things but by living in a holy and Christian manner ? How can we become reconciled with God ? How can we obtain the blessing of remission of our sins, but by a sincere and unequivocal conversion ? — and this conversion can be neither sincere nor unequivocal, if separated from the practice of good works or joined to the slavery of vice. How can death find us occupied with our duty, if living after the flesh, we seek only the satisfactions of time and sense ? And how can we exercise the virtues which divine grace inspires, if we seek not early to acquire these habits ? What acts of faith, of charity, of humility, of resignation shall we perform, if we

are neither faithful, nor charitable, nor humble, nor submissive to the will of God? Who knows not how difficult it is to perform acts more or less perfect or regular, if the habit of them be not early acquired? At death we must encounter a formidable conflict. We are assailed by all the enemies of our salvation, — Satan, principalities and powers, the infirmities of nature, and the accusations of conscience.

What strength and spiritual address are not requisite for victory in such a combat? And although eternal happiness or eternal misery depends upon its success, shall we not prepare to sustain it? Shall we give it no previous thought? And is not such neglect an evidence of gross insensibility? This is all we can do in preparation for death after a good life. Still there is necessary for that the special aid of God's holy spirit. But a bad life will be almost invariably succeeded by a wretched death. I will not deny that the contrary may possibly occur. I propose, indeed, to prove it in the sequel. But I will maintain, that nothing is more rare than a miracle like this. We find only one solitary example of it in Holy Scripture, and we should hence conclude that it is an extraordinary event. Thus it would exhibit an excessive imprudence to take encouragement from this, and to live in impenitence with the

hope of repenting at death. I add, that when the dying person is even converted, and his conversion is true and salutary, it will be either impossible, or at least extremely difficult to assure ourselves of its sincerity, and consequently of its utility. The reason is, it is destitute of its most apparent and unequivocal characteristic, which is amendment: for it is certain that amendment cannot appear until we have successfully passed many occasions of relapse into the same sin, from which we suppose ourselves delivered by an effectual conversion: and this evidently requires some considerable space of time. This characteristic, then, which is a principal one, failing always in a supposed conversion at the hour of death, it is extremely difficult that they should be attended with any sure ground of confidence in their sincerity, and consequently with any peace of conscience. Should not this reflection alone powerfully impel us to seek an early and effectual conversion from sin to holiness? For what can be more sad than to die without knowing whether heaven or hell is to be our portion? Let us, then, early apply ourselves to the study and practice of piety, if we wish to die in the love and in the favor of God, and in the sentiment of that love and favor. Let us live the life of the righteous, if we would die their death. Let us be able to

say with the Apostle, "*I have fought the good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith:*" and then we shall be able also to add with him, "*Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which God, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day.*"*

PRAAYER.

I am at no loss for motives, O my God, to apply myself to the study of holiness and righteousness. Considerations, infinite in their variety, and urgent in their appeal, invite me to engage in it. Notwithstanding all this, I find it difficult to resolve thereon, and much more difficult to act. From time to time I am forming vain designs; but when I am called to their execution, the slightest obstacle arrests me, and I find myself incapable of the least exertion. In a word, LORD, I am frail, and thy help is necessary for me. Refuse me not this, O my God, all unworthy as I am of the least of all thy mercies. Repair by thy grace all the imperfections and derangements of my miserable nature. Pluck from my heart its unhappy propensity for evil; and in its place establish a powerful desire for that which is good —

* 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.

that which is truly good, even piety. Grant that I may seek this with all my might. This may I love powerfully and sincerely : may it be all my delight and all my happiness. Thus may I be enabled to practise it, and consequently to please thee during life, and to possess thee after death, through the merits and mediation of JESUS CHRIST our Lord.

CHAPTER VII.

TO DIE WELL, WE MUST BEGIN EARLY TO DETACH OUR
AFFECTIONS FROM EARTH.

THE third requisite is equally proper, useful and effectual as the second; and their combined influence serves equally to promote a good life and a happy death. We shall realize both, if we detach our affections from earth, and the deceiving advantages of time and sense. For why do we so often sin, as well by neglecting the duties which God has prescribed, as by those excesses which he forbids, unless it is because we love earthly things, riches, honors and pleasures, which we so ardently desire to enjoy and possess? Let the sins be renounced and forsaken which are occasioned by this immoderate love of the world, which will then itself be corrected, and our life will be rendered as pure as before it was irregular.

On another hand, whence arises our reluctance to die, but from this same criminal love for earthly things? We cannot detach our affections from them. Death takes us from them, and annihilates them as to us. Hence it is not surprising that it appears exceedingly frightful to us, and that we

should contemplate this great change with unfeigned dismay. Such would not be our view of this important subject, if our affections were disengaged from earthly things; or at least if we did not desire and love them more than they deserve. As their utility and excellence are extremely limited, we should regard them with great indifference; and thus, on the one hand, they would not lead us to offend God, and hazard the great concern of our salvation; and on the other, would not hinder us from receiving death with joy, whenever the mandate shall come to call us away. Few will deny these things, but fewer still there are who practise them. I do not except even those who imagine they practise them best. There are two mistakes on this subject extremely dangerous. The first is of those who consider they have sufficiently fulfilled this duty in detaching their affections from some particular object, which they distinctly perceive has been to them an occasion of sin, while yet they remain equally charmed by something else, the love of which is probably not more innocent. One renounces pleasure, and remains the slave of avarice; another subdues avarice and follows his pleasures; a third renounces both one and the other, and abandons himself to ambitious pursuits, or is the slave of revenge, or some other destructive pas-

sion. This is not the detachment of our affections which God requires. Such is neither the way of holy living nor of holy dying. What constitutes this, is a general and universal detachment of our affections from earth; not a renunciation merely of one object of sense to adopt another, but a renunciation of all, that we may be wholly devoted to God. The second delusion is hardly less dangerous than the first, and is on the other hand more common and general. It consists in supposing that the objects which are not expressly forbidden, compose not a part of the world, which God has commanded us to renounce, or that while our attachment to these things leads us not to commit any sin, expressly forbidden in the laws of God, this attachment can have nothing in it criminal. On this ground we shall find a vast number who doubt not that their conduct is irreprehensible, under the pretence that they fall not into any of those gross and flagrant sins which distinguish the ungodly and the sinner, while still they are engaged in a continual round of dissipation; they live an idle and voluptuous life, and affect such a sensitive regard for reputation, that they will revenge with vindictive cruelty the slightest offence. Can we imagine an error more gross than this? For after all, every attachment to the creature which terminates here, and leads

not to the Creator, is of itself very criminal, as has been shown in another work. God alone is the true centre of all our affections. He alone is the legitimate end of our actions, and he permits us to seek our rest in the possession of him alone. Thus if we wish to live well, and to die well, let us detach ourselves from all created objects, whatever they may be, and let us give our heart only to God, who is alone capable of making it happy. We shall find in the following meditation the motives which should lead us to the practice of this duty.

MEDITATION.

I have often read in Scripture that the world had nothing in itself lovely; that it is nothing but a vain and empty figure; nothing but a passing shadow, which vanishes away. And it is certain that the supreme authority of God speaking in this sacred book, which is his word, should suffice to prevent me from doubting it. But it is not necessary to have recourse to faith for this assurance; my own experience is sufficient to convince me of it.

In what have I been employed since I received the gift of my reason? My life has been divided amid a thousand different occupations. They

have been so different, that they may be said to have proceeded from entirely opposite principles. Nevertheless, when I carefully consider it, I perceive all these pursuits which seemed so different, arise from one and the same source, and lead to one and the same end. I have been possessed with the love of the world. I have sought it; I have served it; I have adored it: in a word, it has been the sum and substance of my life. For this alone have I thought by night and labored by day. But what has been the success of this toil, and what is the fruit of all these pains? First, I have formed innumerable designs, which I was obliged to abandon, after various efforts for success: sometimes experience taught me that I had not taken the wisest methods: time discovered to me obstacles which I had not foreseen, or convinced me of the magnitude of difficulties which had appeared easy to be obviated. At one time, an importunate competitor deranged my plans and altered my measures, and supplanted me; at another, an unfaithful friend, in whom I had confided as in myself, failed to help me in the time of need; at another, an undisguised enemy has opposed me openly, and has had more power and more credit than I. Sometimes I have succeeded. But besides that these happy results were sufficiently rare, what have they profited me? Have

my passions become less violent, and has my heart enjoyed more satisfaction or more rest? On the contrary, this fire has raged in proportion as it was fed: I have been, alas, but too daring and presumptuous, and I am perfectly sensible that if I had never succeeded, my life had been all the less agitated. But had my success been even uniform, can I suppose that my happiness would have been greater? Could my fancied bliss, thus far so ardently pursued, allay my uneasiness? Could it satiate the avidity of my heart? How could I entertain such an idea, while my own experience sufficiently convinced me, that what appeared most desirable in pursuit was often most disgusting in possession? When even I have been satisfied with myself, is it not sufficient for me to know, that I had not reason for so false a persuasion? In fact, not one of the advantages for which I so much labored, nor indeed all of them combined, could heal my real maladies, nor could relieve my most pressing wants. They could neither make me truly happy, nor prevent my being miserable indeed.

Which are the most dangerous and the most grievous of my calamities? They are doubtless the blindness of my mind and the hardness of my heart; my ignorance, my inability to discover heavenly truth; my attachment for the creatures;

my negligence ; my indifference for the Creator ; my levity ; my pride ; my self-love ; the wounds which my actual sins occasioned, not only to my body, but to my soul ; the wrath of God which they provoked ; the remorse of conscience which they occasioned ; the feeble and disordered state in which they left me, and which hindered me from laboring with the necessary zeal in the great work of my salvation. These are my real calamities ; these are they which it concerns me most to heal. Have the things of this world the power to deliver me ? Can they even diminish or assuage them ? On the contrary, they increase them, and render them more dangerous and more incurable. Besides, when even they have some utility, such utility is circumscribed within the short space of this life, a large portion of which has already passed with a rapidity that astonishes me ; and as for the remainder, whatever it may be, it cannot be great in extent. But they are absolutely useless for all that eternity which awaits me, for that eternity which will absorb me, and which even now absorbs the small capacity of my mind, and confounds the utmost powers of thought. Though my heart should succeed to practise upon my mind the grossest illusions, though I might have too much reason to persuade myself of that which I desire, I am well convinced that I could not for

a moment imagine, that these things which I have so much loved, could be of any use in the world to come; nor can I doubt that all which would remain to me for an endless duration, would be on the one hand the remembrance of my excesses, and on the other the confusion with which I should be overwhelmed by the reflection that I had bestowed my time and opportunities upon worthless objects. Since it is thus that I should judge in all eternity, in that state where the truth shall discover itself all undisguised, and where it shall no longer be abused, either by prejudice or passion, should I not at once make the same decision? Should I not conceive a supreme contempt for those vain objects, whose pursuit has thus far cost me so much pains, exposed me to so many dangers, and what is far more grievous, occasioned the commission of so many sins, the remembrance of which is so grievous to me, the burden of which is so intolerable?

I renounce you then, vain and miserable amusements, deceiving phantoms, empty and false images, which have nothing real or true but the fatal power to dazzle us, and consequently to destroy us. I will no longer entertain for you any thing but contempt and indifference. It is for thee only that I will begin to sigh, infinite ocean of all possible bliss; inexhaustible source of light,

of strength, of life, of satisfaction, and of happiness. Wearied in the pursuit of those idle fancies which have dazzled me, I have recourse to thee, and pray thee to put an end to my uneasiness, and to calm the agitations of my soul. I do not fear that thou wilt reject me, O merciful and loving Redeemer of men. I fear not that thou wilt disdain to accept the heart now offered thee, notwithstanding it has so repeatedly refused thy gracious invitations. Thou couldst do this even without consulting the attribute of thy justice. Thou art able to do this if justice were even thine only attribute. But as thou art as merciful as just, as this mercy is inexhaustible and unwearied, as "*Thou wilt not be always chiding, neither keepest thou thine anger for ever,*" I have hope that thou wilt accept this vile, this miserable offering, which I presume to make of myself. From this quarter I feel, then, that I have nothing to fear. But O, my God, it is my weakness, it is my levity, it is my inconstancy that terrifies me. I fear this heart which seeks thee now, will soon again forsake thee, and return to the vain and criminal objects it has so often pursued. I know it sufficiently to convince me, that there is no excess nor injustice of which it is incapable. But O, my God, I also know the infinite extent of thy power and of thy goodness. I know thou canst subdue and establish my heart

in peace. I know it is easy to make thyself master of it, and to attach it to thee "*in the bonds of a perpetual covenant, not to be forgotten.*" Moreover, thou art wanting neither in mercy nor in goodness to do it; may I not hope then to realize the blessed effect of their holy influence? Refuse me not, O LORD my GOD, refuse me not any of those helps of thy grace, which may so attach me to thee, that "*neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor the height of prosperity, nor the depth of adversity, nor any other created thing, may be able to separate me either from the love*" with which thou dost honor me in JESUS CHRIST, or that which I am ever bound to have for thee, both in time and in eternity.

CHAPTER VIII.

TO DIE COMFORTABLY, WE SHOULD EARLY ARRANGE OUR
TEMPORAL AFFAIRS.

ALTHOUGH the preceding chapter has taught us to detach our affections from the earth, and from its trifling interests, it has not been with any view to inculcate a neglect of the necessary concerns of life. We are doubtless forbidden to give them all our heart, or to make them either the only, or even the principal object of our cares. But nothing prevents that after having sought first and above all things, "*the kingdom of God and his righteousness*," we should give some thoughts, and direct some attention, to our temporal affairs. Many of these are very lawful; some are indeed necessary. A particular regard is to be paid to the disposition of property, when we can no longer retain it, and to distribute it with all possible justice and charity. But what is more important to remark on this subject, we should not leave this care to the last moments of life. We should attend to it in health; for besides that we are more free, and in a better state to think of it with all necessary attention, we should

reserve for the cares of the life to come, all the time which immediately precedes death. These cares are so important, that it is to be considered as a great evil to be distracted by them in any degree at the hour of death, and there is no doubt that this is one of the most dangerous snares of our cruel adversary. On such occasions this malignant spirit, who redoubles his efforts at these last moments, when he sees we are about to escape from him, addresses himself principally to four things. — 1st, Absolutely to extinguish our faith, by persuading us that the Gospel is only a fable, and a fancy of the human mind. 2dly, To plunge us into despair, by persuading us that our sins are so great that God will not pardon them. 3dly, By lulling us into security, by the false supposition that we have more of sanctification and of piety than is necessary for salvation. 4thly, He would hinder us from thinking of our salvation, by exciting a thousand distractions, and drawing our minds to other objects, of which it would be well not to think, at a moment when we should give our entire attention to the great business of our salvation.

Of these four temptations, the last is both the most ordinary and the most dangerous: for as for the first, they who have had any persuasion of the truth during their life, will hardly be disposed

to part with it in their death ; and quite the contrary, the most unbelieving part then with their infidelity ; and nothing is more general on such occasions, than to see the most licentious return to a conviction of the truth of religion, and seek a reconciliation with that God whom all their lifetime they had neglected and opposed. The second is almost as rare as the first. If the dying fear, it is not that they doubt the mercy of God for those who truly and sincerely repent ; but that they doubt the truth and sincerity of their repentance. These fears, however, are by no means to be attributed to our adversary. They are too useful in leading the sinner to a sincere conversion, and to implore the mercy of God, than that we should persuade ourselves they are excited by so wicked a foe. The Gospel is, moreover, so express in its assurance, that there is no sin for which pardon may not be obtained upon sincere repentance ; that we must be wilfully blind to doubt this while we remain at all persuaded of the truth of the Gospel : hence it is seldom that the adversary attacks the dying upon this point. He more frequently attempts to produce security by the persuasion that we have more sanctification and piety than in fact we possess. This third mode of temptation is extremely dangerous. For a sinner prepossessed with the idea that he is truly

converted, becomes negligent of this great work, and strives not to do what he supposes he has already done. Thus confident of his salvation, he relaxes all exertion, or at least omits to do all that is needful. But the most dangerous, and at the same time the most ordinary of all the temptations into which the devil leads us on such occasions, is the distraction of mind which he excites. He fills the mind with the idea of our maladies, or of the remedies which might relieve us from them: or with cares and thoughts of earth, which are then so very unseasonable, and from which it is so very desirable we should be free, that we may bestow all our attention upon the great work of salvation, which cannot then be any longer postponed.

That we may not fall into this snare, we should complete in good season all that might occupy or distract us at the last moment. We should arrange every thing in such a manner, that we need not be obliged to think of such subjects; and that we may be able to devote the whole soul to that eternally important change, upon which it cannot bestow too earnest a concern.

CHAPTER IX.

TO DIE WELL, WE SHOULD THINK OFTEN OF DEATH.

SUCH preparation for holy dying has this advantage, in common with the preceding — that it is not only calculated to render our death happy, but also to render the other means effectual of which I have spoken. What can be more useful, whether to detach us from earth, or to inspire a love of piety and a strict observance of God's holy laws, or to give us the needful earnestness in our applications to God for his grace to die well, and to obtain it of his goodness, than to think often of death? If this thought made more impression, or if above all, it frequently recurred to the mind, I cannot comprehend how we could make any great account of earthly things, seeing so distinctly the impossibility of long enjoying them, and the absolute necessity of being so soon deprived of them for ever. As little can I imagine what power temptations can have, and what great difficulty there can be in resisting them — as well those which arise from evils which we desire to shun, as those which spring from advantages which we seek to possess. We may quickly per-

ceive that these evils cannot be very formidable, nor these advantages very valuable, since death can so soon destroy them as far as they concern us, and place us in such a state as if they had never existed.

Again, I cannot comprehend how there can be any weariness and negligence, in the prayers by which we implore of God the grace of dying well, since we so distinctly see how necessary this grace is to us, and what our misery would be if God should not grant our request. But without a further consideration of the influence exerted by this means upon all the others, suffice it to say, that it is of itself very effectual and very proper, in procuring for us the benefit of a happy death, one of the causes which most contributes to deprive us of those views and feelings which are necessary in the trouble in which the soul finds itself at that moment. It is so overwhelmed by the unexpected presence of this infinitely important object, that it knows not what it thinks or does, or what it ought to do. Whence comes this trouble, but from the surprise occasioned by the presence of an object which was not supposed so near, and of which we had only a confused idea. This would not occur if on one hand we took a more correct view of the subject; and on the other, did not suppose that we would naturally

have such views; or that they were at the last moment with ease obtained. We should have foreseen what would happen; we should have provided for it: in a word, we should have placed ourselves in an attitude to act with all necessary liberty in a conflict so important.

We die not as we should, moreover, because we know neither what we should think, nor what we should do to die well. And why is this, but because we have not taken the necessary pains to inform ourselves of it? And how can we inform ourselves of it without thinking thereon? Finally, we die not as we should, because we have not the dispositions requisite to die well; and we have them not because we let the proper time to acquire them pass away; I mean the time of life and of health, when we might have been able to procure them, if we had realized their necessity, as we might have done if we had given ourselves the trouble to think seriously of death. For this reason the wisest of every age have imposed upon themselves the necessity of thinking often upon this interesting subject. I omit what may be found in the writings of Pagans, and of many others; it is sufficient to say, that the saints, trusting not in themselves, applied to God, and implored of him so deep an impression of this thought in their minds, that it might never be

absent from their reflections. “*So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom,*” is the prayer of Moses; and similar to it is that of the Psalmist, — “**LORD,** *make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days what it is, that I may know how frail I am.*” (Ps. xc. xxxix.) Nevertheless, however proper may be this duty, there are three descriptions of people who neglect it. Some who never think of death; others who seldom think of it; and the last are they who, wearied by a consideration of it, turn away their minds from an object which they find to be intolerable. All reach nearly the same result. In fact, to think rarely and lightly of death is about as useful as not to think of it at all; since it is only those meditations of it which are strong, earnest and persevering, which can make any lasting or valuable impression upon the heart.

The thoughts which are excited in our hearts by the emotions of piety, are attended with two great disadvantages. The first, that they are perceived only by faith, which is an obscure and enigmatical knowledge, or by abstract reasonings, and consequently not adapted to make the same impression on the soul as the objects which strike the senses. The second, that the emotions which these thoughts should awaken, are directly opposed to the natural propensity of the heart, which

bears us only to evil, and that with accelerated momentum. How then, can they take effect, if, on the one hand, they recur but seldom, or if they pass from us with the rapidity of lightning? What probability is there, that being so slight and so transient, they should have power deeply to agitate our souls, and to excite them in so high a degree as is necessary to conduce either to a good life or to a happy death? Nothing is more useless than such transient reflections, such superficial thoughts, which, vanishing in the very moment in which they are formed, leave the soul as they found it, — intoxicated with a love of the world, and as negligent and stupid for salvation as previous to their formation.

All this is quite dissimilar to those deep and persevering meditations which are familiar to the true children of God, and who, viewing their object in all its bearings, endeavor completely to penetrate it, to exhaust it, and leave nothing undone with regard to it which they could do to understand it.

Two considerations chiefly render us inexcusable if we neglect this solemn subject. The one is, its immense importance; the other, the frequent occasions we have to think of it. For as to the first, it is a subject of no small magnitude. It concerns our salvation, which, as I have already

said, and as each of my readers can sufficiently perceive, depends upon the manner in which we die. Thus, nothing more powerfully contributing to form the dispositions which are necessary to a happy death, than the thoughts of which I speak, it is evident that we cannot recall them too frequently to the mind, nor preserve them there too carefully, nor apply ourselves thereto too earnestly and importunately. On the other hand, there are few moments when some object is not presented to the mind capable of exciting them. I pass by the images which nature presents to us of it; I say nothing of winter, or night, or sleep, which have all so great a resemblance to death. The food we use, the care we take for protection against danger; the sicknesses which attack us or our neighbors; the ravages which death is making every day,* as well in cities as in armies, as well in peace as in war, does not all this, which is so constantly occurring, most solemnly admonish us of our mortal condition? How stupid, then, must we be, if so many different warnings are insufficient to bring us to reflection, and to make us think deeply and most seriously on this

* While writing, the translator is surrounded by death in its most frightful form. In twenty-four hours upward of two hundred deaths by Cholera were reported in this city when the disease was at its height. — *New-York, August 1832.*

important subject. I will admit that these thoughts are by no means agreeable. I admit that our delicacy may lead us to shrink from them: but this, far from serving as an excuse, should induce us to redouble our cares, and impel us to make the greater efforts to perform a duty which we never shall fulfil if we do not constrain ourselves to it, and if we do not violence* to our ease and negligence. We should, then, accustom ourselves to see nothing which teaches us the necessity of death, without thinking seriously of it, and as long as possible. But this is not all; it would be well to choose a certain hour each day in which we will oblige ourselves to recall this thought to our minds. It would be well to make a law of this kind, which we should never violate.

I fear that some may treat this as a superstitious scrupulosity: but, it would receive our prompt attention if we would consider the utility and importance of these thoughts, and the inutility of vague and confused resolutions, which vanish so easily, and are so rarely executed. Let each one reflect on the projects of this kind he may have happened to make, and of the consequences which attended them. If they would be candid, there are few who would not confess that they required

* Matt. xi. 12.

something more precise and definite to fix and absorb minds so distracted and dissipated as ours for the most part are.

PRAYER.

I confess to thee, O my God, that I am absolutely inexcusable in neglecting a consideration of death, as it does so justly deserve my utmost attention: inexpressibly great is my stupidity and insensibility. But however the reproaches of conscience overwhelm and confound me, this is not the cause of my greatest uneasiness. The remembrance of the past gives me less pain than the fear of the future. I am apprehensive that I shall hereafter be as negligent as heretofore I have been. I fear, LORD, lest my mind should consider these important reflections with the same indifference it has ever done. It is just as distracted and dissipated as ever. My heart has ever had the same aversion for these salutary thoughts: but as it is in thy power to overcome this aversion, and to arrest this levity and inconstancy, with my whole heart I beseech thee to grant me this two-fold grace.

I beseech thee, that at least for the future I may think seriously of my end, and that neither the importunity of outward objects, nor the incon-

stancy of my own mind, nor the depravity of my heart, may hinder me from performing so right and bounden a duty. Abundant are the means at thy disposal for so happy an effect. Merciful Father, choose the most suitable and effectual, and grant that thus my salvation may progress more and more, and that each moment of my life I may be drawing nearer the end of my vocation. Grant this, O LORD, for JESUS CHRIST's sake.

CHAPTER X.

WHAT SHOULD BE OUR REFLECTIONS WHEN WE THINK OF
DEATH.

THE mere consideration of death is not, however, sufficient; we must endeavor to think of it in a manner the most suitable to excite in our souls those dispositions which are most necessary for holy living and for holy dying: for in fact, there are those who are so frightfully corrupt, that the thought of death, far from profiting them, serves only to confirm them in vice, by inspiring a resolution to plunge still deeper in it. Witness the infidels of Isaiah's time, — "*Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die.*" Here observe what, according to my idea, death offers to the mind most salutary as a consideration.

I. We are first to remark its inexorable necessity; we are to reflect then, that unless we could live till the day of judgment, of which we could scarcely persuade ourselves, and which if it could be, would not alter in the least those preparatory exercises which death should inspire, unless by a special miracle it were otherwise ordered, it is certain and infallible that we must die. (Isa. xxii. 13.)

We must submit to this universal law, imposed upon our nature from the date of the first fatal transgression. There is here no dispensation, neither through honors, nor riches, nor skill, nor health, nor strength, nor any thing else whatever.

II. We must secondly add, that there is not a moment in life when it may not with ease be terminated. There are an infinite number of internal and external causes, violent and natural, which may produce this sad effect. The number, indeed, of these causes is so prodigious; they can so easily perform the work; the resources and means of avoiding it are so few and so uncertain, that it is by no means surprising that we see so many die. The only wonder is, that many more victims do not daily fall before this great consumer.

III. It is not merely possible that we may die even while entertaining this reflection; we are in total and absolute uncertainty as to the precise moment when we shall be called away: we know not whether we have another day to live. We not only have no certainty, we have not even a simple probability, but all the reasons we can produce on this subject are susceptible of confutation by reasons of equal force, without naming an infinite number concealed and unknown, not only to us, but to all men. Thus the ignorance

and uncertainty in which we live upon this subject could not be more general nor more absolute.

Before passing to the fourth reflection, which we should make upon death, it may not be unprofitable to remark the instruction which this last is well adapted to afford. It is highly useful to show us the grossness of the delusion which we so generally practise upon ourselves. One of the things which most effectually prevents us both from thinking of death and from preparing as we ought for it, is the vain supposition that there remains yet further opportunity, — that it is good to think of it; but the necessity for this is not so pressing, because in fact we assure ourselves we have yet more time to live. That which most contributes to confirm us in this error, is on one hand the facility with which we persuade ourselves of what we wish, and on the other an absurd reflection which we make upon what has already happened to us. We often say to ourselves we may at any time die. It is true we must all die, but still we live: we may also thus live for one, ten, or twenty years, as well as now. But it will not require much reasoning to show how unfounded is such a calculation. Let us only avoid confounding two things which are so distinct, that they appear impossible to be misunderstood. The one is, to be sure of dying at a certain

time; the other, not to be sure that we shall live until a certain time. I do not assert the first, I maintain only the second. I say not positively that we shall die in a day, in a year, in ten years; I simply assert we are ignorant whether we have, I say not ten years, I say not one year, but I say only one day, or one hour to live. This is the point to which I bring these reflections, and it is incontestible.

But this granted, what folly would it evince, however confident we might be of living during a certain space of time, to neglect for such a reason to think of death, and to labor to prepare for it? Is not this a gratuitous self-deception? for it is not only that deception which consists in a persuasion of what is false; the same thing happens when we assure ourselves firmly and positively of that which is uncertain. Thus nothing being more uncertain than the time of our death, nothing could be more absurd than to suppose that any dependence should be placed in calculations for the future regulation of our conduct, founded upon such an uncertainty.

Here is something very remarkable; for if we are satisfied to consider that we shall live for a certain time without acting upon this supposition, there would always be great temerity and imprudence in this thought; but this imprudence need

not be attended of necessity with disastrous consequences. The extravagance of it does not consist in thinking simply that we shall live, but in acting upon this belief, and as we would act if we were sure of what we thought, and particularly in neglecting to prepare for death, as it appears we would if we were sure of not dying sooner; although even with this assurance such a negligence would be unreasonable, as we shall see in the sequel. I know not, then, whether I shall live a year, or whether I shall die sooner: whether more or less, the one and the other is equally possible. What should I do in this uncertainty? I should observe the constant and perpetual rule which the wise and prudent have ever observed upon such occasions; I should take the surest course. In doubtful cases, say they in general, we should hazard as little as possible. This is the rule which I am bound to follow.

What is the safest course in the concern under consideration? There can be no doubt on this question. It is to make a timely preparation for death. Pursuing this course, I hazard nothing: by the reverse I hazard all. Uncertainty produces thus the same effect as certainty, and I should act each day in the same manner as I would act, if I knew with certainty that I must die this very day. Thus nothing is more wise, nothing more judi-

cious than this thought, so common, but so little observed, that we should pass every day of our life in the same manner as we would pass it if we knew with certainty it was to be our last.

IV. I return to my reflections, and I say, after all the consideration I can give the subject, that we should view death as that intermediate state which unites time and eternity; or if you will, that it is by this imperceptible point that we pass from one of these states to the other. One moment after death time is finished for us; eternity commences; and what is infinitely important, it commences never to end.

V. Every thing, also, that obeys the laws of time is destroyed, if not absolutely in itself, at least in respect to us. One moment after we are dead, and the whole world exists as little in respect to us, as it existed before God had created it, or as it would be if God destroyed it. Honors, riches, and pleasures, idols which the world adores, objects of its desires, the great end of so much pains, — all this becomes, as it were, nothing in respect to the dead; they have no *“more a portion in any thing that is done under the sun.”* (Eccl. ix. 6.) But if this is so, the utility of these advantages is very limited, and there is little good sense in making much account of them; it is, then, great madness to devote such unwearied

pains for their acquisition : in a word, there can be no greater folly than to devote to them the whole of life, as the greater part of the world in général do. For what do they gain by their acquisition, since, after they are acquired, they cannot enjoy them? But this madness exhibits itself in its highest degree when the desire to possess these advantages, and the cares and the time they employ, prevent our labors for eternity; and not only so, but lead us to act in such a manner as to make this eternity miserable. Here is the last excess of madness, and it is impossible to imagine greater. It is moreover a delusion of daily recurrence, not confined to the unenlightened Heathen, but found among all the people of Christendom.

VI. Death terminates the evils of life as well as its blessings. When this is suffered, we have no longer to fear poverty, nor sickness, nor pain, nor captivity, nor oppression, nor any other of those evils, true or false, real or imaginary, which give us so much uneasiness, and which, when we actually suffer them, appear insupportable. Death is a refuge from all these evils which neither the most wicked nor the most mighty of men can invade, and where we are absolutely in safety from their violence. But if such is the case, these evils are not, therefore, much to be feared, and a

moderate degree of fortitude will suffice us to sustain them. Whatever it may be, we ought not to entertain the same apprehension of it which we feel for those other evils, whose duration is eternal, and which never end after they have once begun. It is to avoid these that we must employ all possible skill, vigilance, and precaution. Above all, we must have no apprehensions except of the first, which, being only of short duration, exposes us to the danger of suffering the second, which are so durable, and consequently so terrible.

VII. Death shall, in a certain sense, destroy this body. It shall not annihilate it, I admit. It shall not ruin the least particle of it, nor prevent the hand of God from restoring it entire at the last day ; but it is certain, at least, that death reduces it to a state where it enjoys no pleasure, and takes no part in all that is done in the world, as little as if it had never existed.

Not so with the soul : after death it is in a state to act, to know, to love, and to exercise all its other functions, not only with the same freedom with which it performed them on earth and during life, but with incomparably greater facility and liberty. If there is any thing, then, to do for these two parts, of which we are composed, it is essential that it should be for the soul, which shall exist for ever, and not for the body, which is so

soon to be destroyed. Whatever we can do for the body, will avail it nothing, neither after death nor after the resurrection. Thus all we can do to adorn it, to give it pleasure, is very badly employed, and can be accounted only labor lost, and unprofitable pains.

VIII. Before death mingles this body with the elements, it reduces it to the most frightful state ; it makes it a tainted carcass, so offensive to the senses, that neither the best friends nor the nearest relatives are able to endure it ; they are obliged to remove it, to conceal it, to bury it in the earth, in order to avoid the horror it would give them if they were obliged to have it in the place of their habitation. What, then, can be more absurd, or more mistaken, than the vanity of those who, under the pretence that this miserable body has some agreeableness, imagine that so small an advantage, if such it may be called, can give them a right inwardly to prefer themselves to those who possess not these supposed advantages ? The eternal happiness or misery which awaits us, depends solely upon the state in which we are found at death. Thus this imperceptible moment decides eternity, and forms, as it were, the seat of our future destination. If we die holily, we shall be happy, and infinitely so, for ever. If we die with evil dispositions, there will be neither

end, nor alleviation, nor consolations to the bitter pains of that eternal death. Misery and despair must be our everlasting portion. It concerns us, then, to labor all we can to die holily; and how vain and useless is every other care in comparison with this.

Let it not be considered inconsistent with sound judgment to spend a whole life in laboring for a single moment; on the contrary, let us consider, that to labor for this moment is to labor for eternity. Let us judge whether this eternity ought not to engage our whole life: let us indeed judge whether it would not merit this, though the present life should be a thousand times longer than it is. Death is the entrance to eternity. Death conducts us before the tribunal of God, and exposes us to his judgment. But these two reflections are too important to be blended with the others which have occupied this chapter, they deserve a distinct consideration; this they will receive in the following chapters.

PRAYER.

It must be, O God, that my hardness of heart is extreme, since so many great objects which pass continually before my eyes make no impression either on my heart, or on my mind. I

know I must die ; I know I am ignorant of the time of my death. I know I cannot promise myself with certainty a single hour of life. Besides, I am not ignorant that my salvation depends entirely upon the state in which death shall find me. I know that if I die in evil dispositions I am irretrievably lost. What should I not do, to avert so great a calamity ? and what can I do with such a design ? I dare not even think of it, and I remain in this respect in a fearful state of supineness. It appears plainly by this, that something more is requisite than outward things, to inspire the feeling of piety. One must be blind not to acknowledge the necessity of an all-powerful and divine grace, and not to see that without this every thing else is perfectly ineffectual. This is the grace which I desire of thee, O my God ; I beseech thee to work in me both to will and to do of thy good pleasure ; and grant that the outward means, which may serve to contribute to the work of my salvation, may have better success than they have heretofore had. Give me a mind and a heart, which may understand what so many things constantly declare in thy behalf, and grant that profiting by those instructions which daily and momentarily I am receiving, I may become wise unto salvation. And may I evince that I am so by early securing

that which will be essentially useful to me in time and throughout eternity. Grant this, O LORD, for the sake and through the merits of JESUS CHRIST our LORD. AMEN.

CHAPTER XI.

WE SHOULD THINK OFTEN OF THE JUDGMENT WHICH WILL
FOLLOW DEATH.

It is, doubtless, good to think seriously of death, as we have seen by the preceding remarks. But it is still more so to think of what will follow ; and nothing appears to me better, as a means of dying a holy and a Christian death, than an attentive consideration of that which will immediately succeed the termination of the present life. The first consequence is the judgment. Thus speaks St. Paul, "*It is appointed unto men once to die, and after that the judgment.*"* But it concerns us to remember, that there is a double judgment to be undergone. There is a general judgment which will immediately follow the resurrection. There is a particular judgment, which takes place either at the moment of death, or in that which immediately follows, but this is impossible to decide, as we believe our souls are happy or miserable before the resurrection, and are either conducted by angels to mansions of glory, or

* Heb. ix. 27.

dragged by devils into the abyss of darkness; there must be in some sense a judgment or a decree, by which the SON of GOD appoints these respective allotments. And as this Judge is too just and too wise to pronounce otherwise, than in conformity to the law which he himself has established in his Gospel, there is no doubt, that in appointing each soul to be received into heaven or cast into hell, he declares only that it has fulfilled the conditions of his covenant, or that it has violated them; that it has truly and earnestly repented of its sins; has believed with a holy faith in him, reposing on his merits and satisfaction; or that it has persisted in unbelief and impenitence. There can be no doubt that this judgment is made known to the soul by him, and that he informs it both what it must expect and what is to become of it. Nor can there be any doubt but that he convinces it of the inflexible uprightness of this judgment: and in particular, that he recalls to the remembrance of the wicked, all the crimes they committed in their life past, with all the circumstances which aggravated their malignity, all the means which they possessed to avoid them, all the aids which GOD's grace had afforded them, and in general all that might serve to convince them effectually, that nothing is more just than the irrevocable doom

which consigns them to eternal punishments. I am satisfied with this idea alone, and I undertake not to decide in what manner this is done, nor what time its execution will require. As these are things concerning which we are ignorant, our silence is our greatest wisdom.

It is, doubtless, well to think of both these judgments, but it appears to me that the particular judgment has something in it more suited to make a lively and deep impression in our minds than the general judgment; this seems too far removed to strike us as forcibly as the other, which more or less immediately follows death, and besides, the general judgment will give no new information to those who shall undergo it. Some shall descend from heaven with JESUS CHRIST, others will come from hell with the devils, and in this way both one and the other will have a previous knowledge of their destiny. But it is not so with the particular judgment which will more sensibly change our condition, causing us to pass in a moment from the obscurity, uncertainty and ignorance which envelope us in this world, to the perfect day of the life to come; where we shall then learn both by the perfect evidence of objects, and by the lively perception of them which we shall then enjoy, all that can conspire either to our greater happiness or to our greater misery. With

this view, I shall direct my reader's attention at present, only to this particular judgment, which appears to me highly useful to inspire our souls with all those holy affections most essential to a good death.

I. I desire then, in the first place, to remark, that truly it is very easy not to think of this great subject and so to discard it from the mind, or to treat it as a chimera of the imagination, and with such a state of mind to give license to every disorder; but whatever is done or thought, we may be assured cannot alter the truth of it, nor save the deluded perverter from an unavailing conviction of that truth, by a sad experience.

If the imaginations and fancies of men had a power to change the order of things, and if it happened only that by not thinking of this judgment, men could escape it, I should not be surprised either that they thought so little of it, or that they should imagine that they had no reason to dread its consequences. But let men do, or say, or think what they please, it can alter the truth neither more nor less. Notwithstanding our unbelief; notwithstanding our stupidity and our negligence, we must of necessity stand before our Judge, and render unto him a strict account of our actions.

II. It is not only certain that we shall not thus avoid our appearance before the judgment seat of CHRIST. It is, moreover, certain that we shall thus ere long appear before him; this shall not be some ages hence. Sooner or later this shall occur: in a few years; perhaps, indeed, it shall be in a few days; perhaps in a few hours. Is there a moment then to lose, and can we too much speed our preparation?

III. It shall not be the same with this judgment, as with those upon earth. Here it is easy to conceal the truth, and to persuade the judges that a man is innocent when he is really criminal. But CHRIST, our heavenly judge, is not to be thus deceived. We shall not be able to deprive him of a knowledge of one single action, of one single word, or of one single thought. All that we have thought, all that we have said, all that we have done contrary to his will, from our birth until our death shall then be produced against us. We shall render an account even of every idle* word, says our Judge himself, who shall call us to this account. Nothing, however small, will be forgotten; nothing overlooked; the sins we remember, and those we have forgotten; those which our conscience has perceived, and those

* *Pernicious* :—Campbell.

of which it had not the slightest suspicion; the sins of malice, and those of ignorance; the sins of commission, and those of omission; all generally and without exception, will be produced, will be examined, and will be weighed, with the utmost precision.

IV. An important end is supposed to be answered by persuading ourselves falsely either that actions really criminal are very innocent, or that at least they are not quite so bad as they at first appear, or as they are in fact. This seems to satisfy us; and in fact it is true, nothing more is wanting to make us taste this false peace, which is one of the most effectual causes of our destruction. But what purpose does this answer, if we cannot thus persuade our Judge? Shall he be regulated by our fancies? Will he not follow the dictates of his own clear and infallible judgment? Will he not see with perfect evidence, all that is good or evil, innocent or criminal, as well in our actions as in the disposition of our hearts? Shall it be possible to disguise or conceal any thing from him? Shall he not perceive it more clearly even than we do ourselves? This Judge plainly declares to us, that he is "*no respecter of persons.*"

V. It appears to us, that certain outward qualities which we possess, or which we think we pos-

ness, entitle us to do without committing sin, certain things contrary to our duty. It occurs to us, that our family, our honors, our office, our age or sex, or many similar circumstances, give us unlimited license in our actions. But it is certain that CHRIST has no regard to them; for, as speaks his Apostle, "*There is [i. e. in CHRIST,] neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither bond nor free; there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in CHRIST JESUS.*"* Nothing can be allowed before him but the privilege of being a new creature.

VI. This judgment depends not in the least degree upon what can be then and there alleged; it depends entirely upon what shall be done and said before, during the present life. It cannot well be doubted, that the soul, awakened from her lethargy, and disabused of her vain imaginations, at this moment seeing very distinctly what she has done, and what she has merited, will condemn herself severely for her past conduct, and will have a lively grief for what she has done, and what she has neglected to do: she will then doubtless desire, with the utmost earnestness, that same grace which she despised during the present life. "*Many,*" says our Saviour, "*shall seek to enter in, but shall not be able; many shall say*

* Gal. iii. 28.

LORD, LORD,"* — but whatever they may be able to do, or think, or say, all shall be useless; it shall not in the least be regarded by their Judge; he shall consider only what has been done during the present life, which is the time to labor in the great work of salvation; "*The night cometh,*" says the Saviour, "*when no man can work.*"

VII. This judgment will be absolutely irrevocable; and the moment it shall have been pronounced, nothing shall either prevent, or suspend, or change its execution. Neither tears, nor sighs, nor prayers, nor humiliation, nor any thing else whatever, can then avail. All that can be done shall not avert those eternal punishments which must then for ever be endured.

VIII. All impossible as it will be to change or mitigate the sentence which shall be pronounced, so easy also in proportion would it be for us now to make this sentence favorable as regards ourselves. Life is given us for this alone. The word of God which is preached to us, its threats, its admonitions, its reproofs, the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit which accompanies the preaching of it, the benedictions which God lavishes upon us, the chastisements with which He visits us, the various dispensations of his providence, all these,

* Luke xiii. 24, 25.

I say, conspire to teach us that we should take the necessary precautions against this formidable judgment, and make it for us not a judgment of condemnation, but a judgment of absolution and of grace.

IX. In a word, two things are equally certain: the one is, that this judgment will make us fully and perfectly happy, or infinitely miserable. The other is, that it will produce one or the other of these effects, according to what we have done upon the earth: whence it is easy to conclude, that much as it concerns us on the one hand, to avoid the frightful evil which it threatens, and on the other to obtain the blessing which it offers, so also does it greatly concern us to labor in good season, and with all the care and diligence that is possible, to do all that may serve to render this judgment favorable, and to shun that which would lead to our condemnation.

I cannot see how it is possible to make these reflections, at least to make them frequently and seriously, without profiting thereby; without detaching the affections from the earth; without raising them to God; and without obtaining new dispositions, more necessary for holy living and holy dying. I am persuaded that the remissness in which we live, and the stupidity in which we die, arises chiefly from this cause; that we never

think of this all-important subject; or that we think of it rarely and lightly. Hence the best advice I can give to sinners is, to think continually of this, and to apply themselves to it with all possible diligence.

PRAYER.

How can I hope for pardon at thy great final scrutiny, O sovereign Judge of men! since whatever illusions I practise upon myself, hinder not that I condemn myself at the tribunal of my own conscience. If I should undertake to justify myself before thee, my own mouth, my own heart, would condemn me. I distinctly see, that in my life past I have in times and ways innumerable, violated thy most sacred precepts. I have done a great number of things which thou hast forbidden: I have neglected those which thou dost command. Have I not, then, just reason to fear that thou wilt punish me, and consequently render me infinitely and eternally miserable? I could not doubt it, merciful Redeemer of men, if thy tribunal were a tribunal of rigor, and if thou didst follow in thy judgment no other rule than that of thy justice. But as thou art no less my Advocate and Defender than my Judge, as my cause is thine, as thou hast been willing to charge thyself with

my sins in order to expiate them, I hope, notwithstanding my unworthiness, that thou wilt not refuse me thy grace, and to pardon the sins which thou hast effaced by thy precious blood. But as it is certain thou wilt exercise this clemency only toward those who truly renounce and forsake their sins, and who live godly, righteously and soberly in this present world, with my whole heart I beseech thee to grant me that help of thy grace which is necessary for my faithful discharge of this great duty. I beseech thee to hear me, good LORD, that it may please thee to give me true repentance unto life. Grant that the old Adam may be so buried in me, that the new man may be raised up in me. Grant that I may love the thing which thou commandest, and desire that which thou dost promise, that so among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, my heart may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD. Amen.

CHAPTER XII.

TO PREPARE FOR A GOOD DEATH, WE SHOULD OFTEN THINK
OF THE BLISS AND GLORY OF THE LIFE TO COME.

THE thought of judgment is then very useful: but we are not to consider it so exclusively as to forget or neglect an attention to its consequences. It greatly concerns us to have a lively and clear apprehension of this twofold eternity, which is to follow the judgment, and is to constitute the bliss of the one, and the wo of the other. I confess it is impossible perfectly to comprehend this glory or this misery; for how can we upon the earth here, where our knowledge is so scanty and so limited, attain this acquaintance with things which can be only understood by actual experience? But however this may be, our efforts should be unremitted in this, as in all other cases of a similar kind, to approach as near the knowledge of the truth as circumstances will admit.

Let us, then, in the first place, consider with ourselves what must be that bliss which God, whose wisdom and whose power are unlimited, has chosen to make the portion of those who shall be the eternal monuments of his goodness,

his munificence, and his mercy. He wills that they should be happy, that they should eternally attest his infinite perfections. This is sufficient to convince us, that the bliss of the redeemed in heaven must exceed man's understanding, as far as the Divine liberality, which is its source, and of which it is to be the manifestation and the proof, is exalted above our feeble comprehension.

II. Next let us consider, that this bliss must be an effect of his love, and that it is impossible but that his love should have effects diametrically opposite to his hatred. His anger even allows to those who are the objects of it, very often, benefits and advantages which appear to us very precious. What, for example, is the glory, what is the power, what the riches, what the pleasures which history teaches us wicked princes enjoyed in various places? These wicked princes were objects of the hatred and of the wrath of God. God detested them, and his vengeance pursued them. Notwithstanding all this, they believed themselves happy, and the greater part doubted not but that they were so. What, then, shall be the felicity of those who shall be the objects of the love of God? What must be reserved for his dear children, when he can deal thus leniently with the vilest slaves?

III. Let us consider, that the love of which this happiness shall be the last effect, is the same love which, for us sinners and for our salvation, spared not its dearest object : the same love which could consent to the mission from heaven to earth, the sufferings, the cruel death on the cross of the well-beloved of the Father, the second person in the adorable Trinity, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, Immanuel, God with us ;— He that spared not all this for us, what shall he withhold ; and what may we not expect in the life to come, where he shall reveal himself so intimately ; since in this life, where he is so concealed from view, he gives us so magnificent a proof of his transcendent power and goodness.

IV. We are to consider, that what shall form the most essential distinction of this happiness, will consist in nothing created. There are excellent creatures among the Creator's works, and he can produce those that are infinitely more excellent : for what is the degree of excellence, however great it may be, which shall exceed the power of God ? Yet among these innumerable degrees, God has not found one that appeared to him capable of rendering us happy ; they were too unworthy and too feeble for such an effect. He hath found only himself, who appeared to him

worthy, I will not say of us, but of the love which he had for us. He gave himself for us. He puts us in possession of himself. What can the imagination conceive to transcend so wonderful an exertion of the Divine goodness? God is not only good, he is the supreme good, the infinite good, the inexhaustible source of all spiritual benediction and grace. He is the good we shall eternally possess, if we die holily. Could our happiness be more perfect or complete?

V. We should consider that the possession of this good will constitute the bliss of angels, those high and glorious spirits. But this is not all: it shall constitute the Divine blessedness itself, for we cannot be ignorant that it is not the heavens, nor the entire world, which constitutes the blessedness of God, but that it is God himself: that it is the possession of his own treasures, of his own perfections. This alone was sufficient to his happiness, before the creation of the universe; and when the universe was created, his happiness was not in the least augmented. He is then happy solely because he possesses himself, and we shall possess him in like manner. He shall be our all in all; he shall be our portion, our heritage, our recompense. What would be our injustice, what would be our folly, if we could not be satisfied

with that which not only satisfies him, but which renders him infinitely and supremely happy.

VI. We are, moreover, to consider, that he will reveal to us the beatific vision of himself. We are fond of seeing and knowing every thing, and this, in a certain sense, is the most natural, and even reasonable of our inclinations. We have no faculty more noble or excellent than the understanding, and the perfection of the understanding consists solely in knowledge. But the knowledge which deserves to be desirable, should terminate in something excellent, great and exalted : and what is so excellent, great and exalted, as God, the first truth, the immutable truth, the primitive light of intelligence ? It shall not, then, prove an inconsiderable privilege, to contemplate the adorable Creator face to face, as speaks the Scriptures. It shall not be a trifling satisfaction to behold with our eyes that august Sun of which Scripture tells us that "*In his presence is fulness of joy.*"

VII. We should consider the satisfaction which arises from the persuasion, or more properly speaking, the idea of two different loves ; one, that which God shall have for us, and the other, that which we shall have for him. It is much to love Him ; nothing gives so much satisfaction as to know that we love what is deserving our affec-

tion. It is much to be loved: we desire this of the lowest of our fellow-creatures: we consider ourselves happy if we are loved of some person of distinguished rank and merit: what shall it then be to know that we are beloved of God? And if both of these advantages are inestimable, what shall it be when we possess them both? what shall it be when we know with equal certainty both that we love him with all our hearts, and that we are tenderly beloved by him?

VIII. We are still to consider, that not only we shall possess all these advantages, that not only shall we know that we possess them, but that we shall be persuaded of the absolute impossibility that we should ever lose any one of them. We shall know that they will endure through all eternity, and that infinite ages which compose it not only shall not bring the least diminution, but shall not prevent the felicity that springs from them from being as lively and as sensible as at the beginning; probably it will be greatly enhanced, and it would not be difficult to show that this idea is deficient neither of probability nor of truth.

IX. I could easily add to what I have said, in drawing a just comparison between the glory of the righteous, and all that is most lovely and delightful upon earth, and show you that nothing

in the world can approach it. I might add, the satisfaction which will arise from the society and intercourse which each of the saints will maintain with all the other saints and with all the angels. I might add all the splendor of the glorious habitation which they shall occupy; all the pomp and magnificence of the heavenly Jerusalem; all the brilliancy which shall strike the eye, in whatever direction it is turned: but, indeed, all this seems comparatively small after what I have said. All that is not God is absolutely nothing for those who shall be permitted to enjoy this infinite good as their eternal portion.

X. I will only say, that there must be added to the possession of good the exemption and absence of all evil. We shall suffer none, either great or small; we shall be protected from all that disturbed us here on earth, and that empoisoned the blessings of life. In particular, we shall be entirely exempt from the most grievous of these evils, which is sin. Though the life to come should possess no other advantage than this alone, this would be sufficient to deserve that we should most ardently desire it.

For what can be either more sad in itself, or more ruinous for those who have some love for God, than to see that during all the time which they are spending upon earth, they cannot avoid

offending him ; doing often those things which are displeasing to him. Is not this what makes the holiest and the best of every age groan, and exclaim with the Apostle, "*O ! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death.*"—Let us combine these various considerations, and we shall see whether a bliss so perfect, and which comprehends so many advantages, deserves not on the one hand, that we should make it a principal object of our prayers ; and on the other, that we should take all possible means to obtain it. Let us judge at the same time whether we could have more effectual means than this, to incline us to such a resolution, and to give us strength to perform it. In fact, nothing is more consistent with self-love, that is to say, with the most natural of our feelings, than the desire to be happy. Thus to impress this great truth deeply in the mind, that happiness can be found only in heaven, and that piety alone can conduct us there ;—to recall as frequently as possible this truth to the mind, to view it in all its interesting bearings, and in a word, to pay strict attention to every thing best calculated to move the heart and mind, is certainly a very proper means of placing ourselves in a state of preparation for holy living and holy dying.

PRAYER.

I know not, O my God, what should most overwhelm me, in the consideration of thy goodness, which offers me all thy bliss and all thy glory ; whether it is my stupidity which allows me to think of it without emotion, or my folly which leads me even to neglect all that it could have most necessary to procure me such advantages.

What am I, LORD, and what have I been able to do, that might induce thee to seek me ? What is there in me but misery, unworthiness and sin ? And what is there that all this could draw upon me but thy hatred ? Thy name be eternally blessed, and let all the earth adore and celebrate so great an exertion of mercy.

But, since I have not as lively a sense of it as I ought ; with my whole heart I beseech thee to grant me thy help, happily to reach such a state ; that on the one hand, I may comprehend this thy goodness ; and on the other respond to it by my actions. Inspire me with all that gratitude which so much goodness merits, and at the same time with all that vigilance, all that activity, all that ardor which is necessary to my success.

Give me, LORD, to despise every thing else, and not to sigh for any thing but what thy benevolence

hath offered me. Give me to labor with all my might, or rather give me the strength necessary to labor with success. Work in me to will and to do; work all, O my God, since I can do nothing so well, as in thee and by thee, through **JESUS CHRIST** our Lord.

CHAPTER XIII.

TO PREPARE FOR A GOOD DEATH, WE SHOULD THINK OFTEN
OF HELL.

I AM by no means of their opinion who pretend that Christians should never think of hell, and who would have us satisfied in considering only the mercy of God in his Son, and the glory which he has reserved for us in heaven. They would teach us, that the thought of hell is calculated only to inspire fear, which is useless without love, while the above-named considerations are sufficient to subdue the most inveterate sinners, and to inspire them with all the necessary sentiments both for holy living and for holy dying.

But this is surely a mistake. It may possibly suffice to speak of the mercy of God, and its effects to those, who already love him in sincerity and truth, and whose hearts, sanctified and renewed by his grace, are susceptible of all those emotions of devout gratitude, which his goodness is so well fitted to excite. But as the number of such is comparatively small, and as the greater part of the human family consists of those, who subject to the bondage of their passions, and guided

solely by self-love, remain immersed in a fatal security, or the dupes of a no less fatal licentiousness; it is certain while in such a state, to speak to them only of the mercy of God, is to confirm them more and more in evil dispositions, and to hinder them from awaking out of so dangerous a lethargy, which is the most general and effectual cause of our ruin. It is nothing but fear which can trouble this false peace, and bring men to think seriously and effectually of their salvation. Hence it is that God so often in the Scriptures denounces his wrath against sinners; and that we might not suppose that these denunciations belonged only to the dispensation of the law, which was a dispensation of severity and terror, we need only consider that the threats are neither less severe nor less frequent both in the Gospels and in the Apostolical Epistles than they are in the Old Testament. We are only to consider that CHRIST has given us incomparably greater information, concerning hell and its punishments, than all the prophets together; and that we may say with equal truth in respect to this eternal death, as of the life and immortality opposed to it, that this mighty Saviour has made it perfectly clear by his Gospel.

Far then from wishing to be more wise than God, more evangelical than CHRIST, or more

spiritual than St. Paul, and the other apostles, we are to consider that the thought of hell is very useful and effectual, particularly to sinners still engaged in vice, and subject to the tyranny of the devil. It is also serviceable to those weak and imperfect Christians who have not resolution to resist various temptations; these, as well as the greatest sinners, may find such a reflection highly serviceable: for as nothing is more opposed to our self-love than the suffering of an evil so terrible as eternal condemnation, we may have room to hope that serious reflection upon it will lead to the resolution of doing all that is so necessary to avoid it. I therefore advise those who have a serious desire to die well, frequently to think on this subject: to make it more useful and effectual, I entreat them to consider, that it is impossible to imagine not only any thing more terrible than eternal condemnation, but also, any thing that even approaches it.

I. Although this great calamity should relate to nothing else than the loss of God, and consequently the privation of the supreme good, of that infinite good which of itself can satisfy all our desires, it must appear infinitely formidable; and, indeed, what can we imagine more frightful than such a loss? the loss of a blessing so great and so precious; of a blessing which was offered, and

which we might have possessed ; of a blessing of whose inestimable value we are convinced, and which we shall ever most ardently desire. But circumstances will not be then as now. We do not at present realize this privation : on the one hand, because we know and love God only feebly and imperfectly ; and on the other, because we are occupied with other objects, on which we bestow all our cares. But soon these vain objects shall disappear, as in an instant, and the soul shall distinctly know all the impossibility of happiness without God : it shall desire the possession of this its only satisfying portion ; and failing to realize this desire, it shall be torn asunder by grief and inconsolable despair.

II. We shall not only be deprived of the supreme good, but of all other blessings also, without exception. There shall not remain one, not even the smallest and least real. Let us endeavor, moreover, to imagine the despair into which such a privation will infallibly cast us. We are indeed too miserable and too needy to do without all external things. We might be in a certain sense satisfied in *being* nothing, provided only we *had* something : but to *be* nothing and to *have* nothing is complete misery, is “despair indeed.”

III. But here is only the first and least sensible part of the misery of the damned : they are not

only deprived of every blessing ; they are overwhelmed with the most severe calamities. The most terrible, in my idea, is the keen and penetrating perception of the hatred and the wrath of God : nothing is more overwhelming, nothing more despairing than such a conviction ; nothing more than this is wanting to suggest the words of Cain, “ *My punishment is greater than I can bear.*”

Nothing but this led Judas to the guilt of suicide : besides, it is certain that these miserable men could have had only a confused and very imperfect view of this formidable wrath of God ; whereas the damned will perceive it very distinctly, or rather they feel it very acutely, and are penetrated with it to their inmost souls. Hence those words which the Holy Spirit has taught us they shall use ; “ *Rocks and mountains, fall on us and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.*”*

IV. This wrath shall be openly revealed, not only by the evidence which shall accompany all the objects which shall be exhibited in the life to come, but also by very sensible and remarkable effects. I speak of that “ *gnawing and undying worm*” which shall for ever prey upon the wicked.

* Rev. vi. 16.

I speak of that "*devouring fire which never shall be quenched.*" I speak of the torments which the devils shall inflict, and what shall be endured as well in the soul as in the body. I pretend not to decide positively in what all this consists, nor to boast of knowing it. I acknowledge there is in this, as in every thing else, many things of which we are ignorant. I shall offer only three reflections, which are incontestible.

The first is, that the damned suffer in body and soul. They must needs suffer in their soul, since they already suffer therein, though their body is yet in the tomb. If it were otherwise, would CHRIST have represented the rich sinner in torments, and put those words into the mouth of Dives, "*I am grievously tormented in this flame.*" They must necessarily also suffer in their bodies after the resurrection; why should they be raised if their body were exempt from pain?

Secondly. If Scripture speaks metaphorically of these sufferings, as I doubt not it does, we are not to imagine on that account any of the force should be abated in their literal signification. On the contrary, this force is much enhanced. We must form the same conclusion here as we did in respect to the blessedness of the saints. We must believe that as what holy Scripture teaches us of the glory of the righteous, gives us only a very

imperfect idea of that future and eternal bliss, so also that what it says of the misery of the impenitent is nothing compared with what they eternally suffer.

My third reflection is, that it is certain at least that all the most severe sufferings upon earth are not to be at all compared with what the damned for ever suffer in hell. We can easily discover this from the analogy which subsists between the sufferings of the wicked and the happiness of the saints. For as what these highly privileged friends of God enjoy, is incomparably more exquisite than all that is most sweet and charming upon earth, we may at the same time be assured that all which is most appalling here is not in the least to be compared with the sufferings of hell. We may besides collect this from what the same Scripture assures us, that the judgment which God shall inflict upon these miserable sinners shall be a severe judgment. We may also collect it from this, that the same Scripture represents the justice of God as slumbering during the present life, and as only awaking to its exercise in a future life, though we also at the same time know that even in this life he often visits the wicked with severe inflictions of his wrath.

Finally, we may learn this truth from the goodness of God, which often permits his dear children

to suffer upon the earth all that is most insupportable and grievous. Should we not infer from this that he reserves quite other sufferings for the victims of his vengeance?

V. I add three other considerations to all those I have already offered. The first is, that of the eternity of the sufferings of the wicked, and the absolute impossibility both of their termination and of their mitigation, in however small a degree, and of becoming familiar with them, or hardened against them. In my opinion, here is what appears most appalling; a trifling evil troubles us while it is lasting and obstinate. What then must the greatest of evils do, while it shall not only be durable and obstinate, but also eternal? Into what despair shall it not cast those whom it shall overtake, when, after millions of ages, they shall see that it has abated absolutely nothing of its severity.

VI. If the damned could be ignorant of this truth, if they could flatter themselves falsely of this hope, that some day their miseries would end, this error, all vain as it would be, might render their sufferings in some degree supportable. But this is what could not occur. These miserable people know all the unchangeableness of their allotment. CHRIST will reveal it to them in that sentence which he shall pronounce at the day of

judgment, "*Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.*"*

Thus we may say that this knowledge shall occasion them to suffer in every point of eternity, it being certain that they not only will be afflicted with what they will suffer at any specific point, but also with the expectation of what they ever shall suffer in all the boundless extent of the eternal ages.

VII. Finally, what infinitely will augment the despair of the wicked in hell, shall be the reproach which they will cast upon themselves as being the only authors of their misery. If it were simply an evil to which they had not contributed, which came by accident, or by the power of an enemy, against whom they could not defend themselves; they might have reason to reflect whether the satisfaction of having no self-reproach, would not be sufficient to support them with fortitude in all their affliction.

But what will deprive them of such consolations is, they perfectly will know that they might have avoided the miseries into which they have fallen; that they were warned against them; that they had means which they refused, and that it is their obstinacy alone and the attachment which they

* Matt. xxv.

have for the things of the world which had hindered them from laboring to guard against them. This it is which will awaken their rage and fury against themselves, and which shall force them to confess that they suffer nothing but what they most justly deserve. All this enables us in some degree to learn how great is this misery. It being thus appalling, should we not use every exertion to escape it? And what can lead us more effectually to such a resolution than to make it a frequent subject of our thoughts. "THE CONSIDERATION OF HELL," says St. Chrysostom, "IS THE MOST PROPER MEANS TO AVOID FALLING INTO IT."

PRAYER.

Infinite are the obligations which I owe thee, most gracious God! but I know of none more great or more considerable than this, that I am not actually in hell, and that I am not suffering the torments which the wicked there endure. I acknowledge with shame and confusion of face, that I have often deserved so severe a judgment. I acknowledge that thy justice may have often demanded it of thee, notwithstanding thy mercy has not consented to it, and by an inconceivable effort of thy long-suffering I am still continued

upon earth, where I may escape these frightful evils, by which it is not owing to my good conduct that I have not long since been overwhelmed. With my whole heart I thank thee, O my God ; and I beseech thee, at the same time, to give me grace, that I may profit by all this delay which is afforded me, and that I may make a better use of this and all other mercies which thou bestowest upon me than hitherto I have done. I am in danger of abusing this expression of thy goodness as heretofore I have done. It is even certain that I shall do so again unless thou assistest me with thy grace and thy help. Do not refuse it to me, merciful Father ; enable me to think more seriously of my salvation than I have hitherto done. Graft into my mind the ideas which have been presented to me. Give me grace to be in such a manner impressed with them, that their effects may appear in all my actions. May I live as knowing what I have reason to expect both in doing and in neglecting thy will. May the fear of losing thee increase the desire thou hast given me of possessing thee. And, in fine, may every thing work together for good in my efforts to obtain a well assured hope of that infinite and inestimable blessing to which thy goodness hath given me the right to aspire, and which hath been purchased for me by the precious blood of thy

Son our Saviour JESUS CHRIST, in whose adorable name I offer these petitions, through whose merits and mediation I beseech thee to accept them, and to whom, with thee, O FATHER, and thee, O HOLY GHOST, be ascribed, as is most justly due, equal and eternal honors. Amen.

THE
DEATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS:
OR
THE WAY OF HOLY DYING.

BOOK III.

WHAT WE SHOULD DO IN SICKNESS, IN ORDER TO DIE IN A
HOLY AND CHRISTIAN MANNER.

At thy good time
Let Death approach ; I reckon not—let him but come
In genuine form, not with thy vengeance arm'd,
Too much for man to bear.

* * * * *

Then shed thy comforts o'er me ; then put on
The gentlest of thy looks.

* * * * *

But chiefly *Thou*,
Whom soft-eyed pity once led down from heaven
To bleed for man, to teach him how to live,
And, oh ! still harder lesson ! how to die ;
Disdain not *Thou* to smoothe the restless bed
Of sickness and of pain. Forgive the tear
That feeble Nature drops, calm all her fears,
Wake all her hopes, and animate her faith,
Till my rapt soul anticipating heaven
Bursts from the thralldom of incumbering clay,
And on the wing of ecstasy upborne
Springs into liberty, and light, and life.—*Porteus.*

THE
DEATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

WHAT WE SHOULD DO IN SICKNESS, IN ORDER TO DIE IN A
HOLY AND CHRISTIAN MANNER.

WE have seen what should be done in health. If those directions are strictly and carefully observed, little will remain to be performed. It is at least certain that what is most difficult and also most necessary, will have been done. We shall be in such a state, that when taken away by some unexpected accident, which will not allow us a moment for reflection, we shall not fail to die in the favor and love of God, and we shall leave the world, only to be advanced to the possession of heaven. But as there are few who in respect to these things do what they ought, as many of those who make the attempt, only very imperfectly discharge this obligation; and as, finally, too much care and precaution cannot be used, in a concern of this importance, it will not be amiss to mark, as distinctly as possible, what should be done at the approach of death; and as

there are two forms under which death appears, —as a natural death, or as a violent death ; it is to the directions applicable only to the former of these that the reader's attention will be invited in the following pages.*

Natural death is generally preceded by sickness. We are consequently to observe, in what manner we should receive these premonitions. This is what I shall endeavour to illustrate, without subjecting myself to the laws of an exact and rigorous method, which would allow me to speak only in relation to death. As it is well to know how we should receive all kinds of sickness, even those from which we may not have occasion to fear death, I hope my reader will not take it amiss, that I a little transcend the limits which my subject may seem to prescribe, and take notice of the principal reflections which a sick person should make, when he finds himself attacked by disease, whether dangerous or not.

* See translator's preface.

CHAPTER I.

FIRST REFLECTION THAT A SICK PERSON SHOULD MAKE UPON
HIS AFFLICTION — IT IS THE WILL OF GOD.

THE first thought which should enter our mind when attacked by any sickness is, that this sickness is a manifestation of the will of God, and the execution of one of the decrees of his providence. It concerns us to remark the language of Scripture upon this subject: it teaches us that the smallest birds cannot fall to the ground without an express permission from the Master of the Universe: it assures us that "*the hairs of our head are all numbered;*" that "*affliction cometh not from the ground, and springeth not from the dust:*" that it is the will of God which makes prosperity and adversity; which creates darkness and light; which obliges us to lie down in the grave, and at the appointed time, bids us come forth. On these grounds we must assure ourselves that the sickness which we suffer has its source in this supreme will of God: this single reflection teaches us we should suffer all our afflictions with patience; that is, in the first place we should be careful not to murmur against God,

nor to complain of him as if the severity with which he treated us had something in it unjust, and disproportioned to our merits. Here is a dangerous extreme, which we cannot too carefully shun: it discovers a combination of pride and unbelief, united with impatience and scrupulousness: it shows that we have so little fear of God, so little resignation and humility, that it would be no difficult thing for such a heart to go all length in crime; and that far from having any thing good in it, there are probably few of the vices which it does not possess. We should be persuaded, on the contrary, that God exercises only his sovereign right, in thus afflicting us, and that we have nothing in us to oppose it. We should remember that we are his creatures, that all we have is the work of his power, and an allowance of his liberality; that consequently he has over us an unlimited power and authority, and that however he may dispose of us, he will do nothing against which we can have any grounds of complaint.

This is not all: we have no right to afflict and disquiet ourselves with the divine dispensations: it is for us to acquiesce and submit absolutely, and without reluctance, submitting our will to that of God, far from pretending that the will of God should condescend to a conformity with ours.

This will not be difficult, if we can deeply impress on the mind that the will of God is not only supreme, absolute and independent, but also infinitely right, infinitely wise, and directed by lights which never deceive; that he is actually ignorant of nothing, and that he distinctly sees all the degrees of good and evil; all that is useful or hurtful in every thing.

This premised, we should be firmly persuaded that if God has willed that we should be attacked with sickness, it is because he has seen, that all things well considered, it was better, it was more desirable that we should be thus visited, than that we should be exempt. I dwell not at present upon the grounds of this necessity; I do not here examine whether it is our own interest, or the interest of our neighbor, or the glory of God which requires the allotment; I say only in general without descending to particulars, that what God does on this occasion is better and more worthy of him and of his wisdom than the contrary.

But admitting this principle as incontestible, would it not be highly injurious to the character of an infinitely just and holy God, if we should oppose his righteous government? And why should God prefer our caprices and our fancies to the most inviolable rules of his own wisdom?

It is also well to consider, that we are not singular in suffering. It is a general law, and common to all men, without excepting the greatest, the richest, the happiest and the holiest: kings and emperors are sick as other men: the good are in this no more privileged than the wicked: JESUS CHRIST himself, the eternal Son of God, and the most dear object of his love, has suffered; and if we do not find in the history of the Gospel that he was ever sick, we at least find that he was "*a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.*" What right have we for pretending to be more privileged than all these persons, so distinguished and exalted, by a dispensation from a law so unsparing and universal. Should we not freely acquiesce, and stifle all the risings of reluctance which the flesh suggests in our hearts in opposition to such a dispensation?

Again, it is well to consider, that all these struggles to resist the divine will are, on the one hand, very unavailing; and on the other, very pernicious and criminal. We may do what we please; we may find fault that God afflicts us; we may complain and murmur; but all this will not diminish nor alleviate our evil, nor render it more tolerable: on the contrary, it will still more incense the Divine Majesty against us; it will kindle his wrath afresh, and will oblige him to lay

upon us more severe and heavy afflictions during this life, to say nothing of the "*vengeance*" which "*belongeth*" unto him in the world to come. Thus, though even the love of order and of justice may not suffice to induce us to suffer with patience the afflictions of life, the consideration of our own interest ought effectually to produce such a disposition, and lead us to say with the Prophet, "*I was dumb; I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it.*"* It may possibly be said, that this, though strictly true, is extremely difficult, and that infirmity such as ours is not capable of such an exertion. It is difficult, I admit, but not impossible: it is a duty which many perform: for to say nothing of our Saviour, JESUS CHRIST, who suffered with such firmness and courage the cruel pains of the cross, and not to speak of those who were subject to the same infirmities and imperfections as ourselves, what did not the martyrs endure? Can we imagine any punishments, however cruel or severe, which they did not patiently suffer? Did they not pass a whole day, sometimes several successive days, upon chairs of heated brass, on burning grates, on wheels and crosses? Were they heard to utter, I will not say murmurs against God, but even complaints or reproaches

* Ps. xxxix. 9.

against the executioners who tortured them, or the tyrants who condemned them? Why cannot we suffer with a similar fortitude pains altogether lighter and more tolerable than those which they endured? Shall we say it was grace which sustained them, and that the Holy Spirit poured into their souls the most sufficient consolations? I deny it not. But besides that the martyrs and other saints were not alone in the exhibition of fortitude; besides that Pagans and other infidels have given remarkable examples of it; besides that, I say, to whom, I ask, is it attributable, but to ourselves, that we receive not the same helps which strengthened and supported the martyrs? What must we do to obtain them, but ask for them with humility, with ardor, and with confidence? What must we do, but with humble penitence implore the mercy of God? Has he not formally and expressly engaged to hear such prayers and grant such requests? Has he not said, "*Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you?*" And more particularly, "*If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?*"*

* Luke xi. 9, 13.

Besides, the principal source of difficulty in the performance of this duty, is not so much the weakness of our mortal nature, as a certain scrupulousness contracted of our own accord, and induced by the manner in which we are brought up. We accustom ourselves to suffer nothing; we resign ourselves to our passions: the very shadow and appearance of trouble casts us into fearful excitement. Besides, we also live an indolent, voluptuous life: we seek only for pleasures and diversions: labor is disagreeable, and self-denial intolerable. Thus we are not only frail and weak, but we are also fastidious and effeminate. To our natural infirmity we add the habit of suffering nothing; while this our frailty is already too much opposed to that which we suffer with fortitude. Consequently, far from deriving an excuse from all this, nothing more clearly discovers how intolerable is our aversion to trials.

Instead then of offering an excuse, either to others or to our own minds, with a view to diminish the criminality of our impatience, we should reproach ourselves and consider this one of the most reasonable occasions which we have to humble ourselves before God. We should seek to establish ourselves upon better grounds, laboring for it diligently, and earnestly imploring

God's grace for success. This we may do in the following prayer.

PRAYER.

O my God, that state of life into which it hath pleased thee to call me, obliges me to ask of thee many favors which are absolutely needful to me. But there are two of a peculiarly pressing necessity, which with my whole heart I beseech thee not to refuse. The first is the pardon which I request for all those emotions of repugnance which my unhappy flesh, that fruitful source of iniquity, opposes to the execution of thy will : it would be very meet, that I should desire what thou dost appoint, and that I should submit myself holily, with pleasure and with love, to thy supreme will ; to that will, so right, so wise, so clear, so good and so beneficent. Thou seest nevertheless, O LORD, with what pain and constraint I submit myself to it, and what efforts I am obliged to make to resist the disposition of formal and direct opposition to thy holy will. I see it myself, O my God, I feel it and I am confused. I hence observe, (what too many other things teach me,) that I have failed to profit in thy school, and that after so many warnings, which thou hast given me, and so many helps,

which thou hast been pleased to grant me, I am still very far from having subjected as I ought, my rebellious will to thy yoke. I am grieved for it, O my God, and I beseech thee with my whole heart, that it would please thee to pardon this deficiency, as also all the others I am guilty of, and to blot them out by the perfect satisfaction of thy Holy Son. But at the same time I also beseech thee, in the name and through the merits of this dear object of thy love, that it would please thee to heal this shameful and criminal infirmity, by the effectual power of thy Holy Spirit. My will, O LORD, all rebellious and intractable as it is, remains yet wholly in thy hands; thou canst change and create it anew; thou canst incline and turn it as it shall please thee. It can neither be so weak that thou canst not strengthen it; nor so wavering, that thou canst not establish it; nor so rebellious, that thou canst not easily subdue it; nor so corrupt, in fine, that thou canst not by one word sanctify it. Refuse me not this miracle, O merciful Father; withdraw not thou thy help, neither on account of my unworthiness, which is extreme, nor on account of the defects even of the prayer by which I solicit thee for it. Cover this unworthiness and these faults by the merit of thy dear Son. Grant to his powerful intercession; grant to the voice

of his precious blood; grant to my pressing necessities, and to the weak and languid desires of my heart, that favor which my sins, my aggravated, my innumerable sins might incline thee to refuse.

Make me to comprehend in all its extent, the obligation I am under, to will what thou dost will, and to be led, not by my caprices and my fancies, but by the unchangeable rules of thy word and by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit. Give me to reverence thy holy will; give me above all to love it; and for this purpose, to know its rectitude, its goodness and its perfection. Provided it please thee to grant me this grace, which I presume to promise myself, from thy goodness; I ask not that my troubles should cease, I am willing, O my God, to suffer as long as it shall please thee that I should suffer. Thy grace is sufficient for me; and if thy strength be perfected in my weakness, the most bitter afflictions shall become sweet, because they shall become useful and advantageous. For that grace then I seek, for this I ask with my whole heart, in the name, and through the infinite merit of thy holy Son JESUS, and by the prayer which he hath taught me.

Our Father, &c.

CHAPTER II.

SECOND REFLECTION — POSSIBLY THE MALADY MAY BE
PUNISHMENT FOR SOME SIN.

AFFLICTIONS in general, and sickness in particular, are the consequences and effects of sin : they are even doubly so. For first, there is no cause for them in innocence, and it is sin which has subjected us to them ; but besides this general consideration, it is certain that many particular sins which we commit, draw upon us these chastisements of the LORD, these formidable effects of his wrath. There are two ways in which this occurs. They are sometimes the punishments which God inflicts on his enemies, and the vengeance he executes for their wickedness. They are also sometimes paternal chastisements with which he visits his children, not to punish them, but to make them know the irregularity of their conduct, and to lead them more effectually to reform. Thus he teaches us by St. Paul, "*When we are judged, (that is afflicted,) we are chastened of the LORD, that we should not be condemned with the world ;*"* as if he had said, that when God

* 2 Cor. xi. 32.

presents himself to us with a rod, he meets us as his children. With such views, one of the first thoughts which should occur to us, when visited with affliction, or attacked by sickness, should be, that it is very possible this sickness or this affliction, may be either the punishment or the chastisement, of one or many sins which we have committed. I say not that we ought positively to assure ourselves of this. I say only, that we should consider it as probable, and as possible, because in fact it might be that such an effect might arise from various other causes. The trials of Job, and the blindness of that man whose sight was restored to him by our Saviour, and of whom he said that "*neither his father nor his mother had sinned,*" that is, it was not their sins which had brought upon him this affliction, all this I say shows clearly that our own may arise elsewhere than from our sins.

But, however this may be, they may hence arise. This is the most ordinary and common cause. Hence we should always bear this in mind, and in our first reflections it is well to look to no other source than this; consequently, the first care we should observe when a sickness attacks us, is to take a particular review of our actions, and to consider whether there has not been something, which may have brought upon

us this evidence of the Divine displeasure. I am not much apprehensive that it will be difficult to find those which we may consider as the true reasons of our trouble. For this we must have either a purity greater than that of the majority of good people, or a consummate pride capable of the grossest presumption. Our difficulty would be to determine which sin was the true cause, for at once we should see so many apparent causes of this effect that we should hardly know how to decide which was the true one. It may be said, we do not perceive that we are more guilty than before, and we may conclude that as God has thus far borne with our sins past without correcting them, it cannot be credible that the present have induced our affliction. But this reasoning is not just. God was able to bear with us though we may have deserved chastisement. He might have invited us to repentance by the riches of his goodness, of his patience and long-suffering. He might have employed other means when he found these unavailing. He might have had recourse to the rod of his correction, and nothing is more conformable to the ordinary rules of his providence, than such a method.

Thus, whether we should be led into greater excesses than formerly, or whether we had only persisted in our first transgressions, we have yet

given him too much occasion to correct or to punish us, and consequently, we are to impute our visitation to our own bad conduct only.

Pursuing such a course, this reflection will be very proper to produce two effects, equally salutary and profitable. We shall see in the first place very distinctly, the obligation we are under to suffer our afflictions with patience. For indeed, what occasion can we have to find fault that God corrects us, if it is true that our own bad conduct has required this chastisement. Under this supposition, we have none to blame but ourselves, and if our troubles have filled us with sorrow, this sorrow should have no other object than our sins, which are its only cause.

But this is not all; it is not only true that we have deserved what we suffer; it is also certain that we have merited far more than all we have ever suffered. It is very certain that God has by no means proportioned his chastisements to our sins; he has had much more regard for our infirmities, than to the magnitude of our faults: therefore, far from complaining of that which he calls us to suffer, we owe him a lively and deep-felt gratitude, and very humble thanks, because he has not obliged us to suffer more, as he might have done, if, instead of following the dictates of his clemency and of his goodness, he had only

observed the rules of his justice. Our sins deserve no less a punishment than hell; this is the only punishment proportioned to such faults; exact justice could not be satisfied with less. Instead of those frightful punishments, God obliges us to suffer only light chastisements, and which are absolutely nothing in comparison with that we deserved to endure. Should it not, therefore, deeply affect us to see that he spares us in such a manner, almost entirely exempting us from what he might have obliged us to suffer?

But we must not forget that if we are the children of God, what we suffer is not, properly speaking, the punishment of our sins, to which justice may have subjected us in the way of satisfaction; it is a paternal correction, designed and employed by his goodness, to bring us back to a sense of our duty. This is the idea which Holy Scripture gives us of our afflictions;—“*Whom the LORD loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, GOD dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? He chastens us for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.*”*

* Heb. xii. 6, 7, 10.

I hence conclude, that we have great occasion of thankfulness to God, not only that he should exempt us from suffering, but also that he should send us our trials; for truly, what we suffer is incomparably more useful and profitable for us than it could possibly be disagreeable. It is a bitter remedy, I allow, but infinitely salutary. It is an inconvenience to the flesh, I admit, but it restores to the soul that health which is infallibly succeeded by life eternal. It obliges us to suffer for a few moments, and it renders us happy throughout eternity. We may judge from this how unjust it would be to complain of that which deserves our thanks, and to find occasion of sorrow and affliction in that which should fill us with joy. We have sufficient light and soundness of reason to observe this rule in that which concerns temporal evils. When we are wounded or sick, we thank and reward the surgeon or physician who attended us, although the first has not spared the knife its painful work, nor the last his bitter medicines. Why should we not employ the same reasoning in respect to our spiritual Physician, since the remedies which he dispenses procure for us strength, and a health far more precious than those which men can give or preserve to us.

Such is the first conclusion which this reflection should produce; the second is a strong resolution

to renounce the sins which have brought upon us this chastisement. Nothing is more proper than this duty, which may be shown by several considerations.

The first is, that it would appear that our conduct was very displeasing to God, and consequently must be very blameable and criminal, since it would seem to compel him to use this means for our reformation. The evil must be very great and very dangerous, since our good Physician is constrained to have recourse to such remedies. "*He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.*"* He is not led to it but with a kind of regret and repugnance. When he resolves upon it, we should persuade ourselves that there is some extraordinary derangement in our conduct, and some evil disposition in our heart. This is the conclusion we should draw from it. We notwithstanding see, that in proportion as we are sinners and guilty, in the same proportion should we labor to repent and amend. The more dangerous the sickness of the soul, the more care should we take for its recovery. There is this difference between the remedies bodily and spiritual, that the first act independently of the will, which cannot be said of the second. When

* Lam. iii. 33.

we have taken a remedy belonging to the first, it will perform its work whether we will or not: but the remedies of the soul, at least those which are outward, are not efficacious any farther than we seek to render them thus, by ourselves laboring and co-operating with Divine grace in the production of their desired effects. Thus our chastisements, being dispensed only to correct our imperfections, we should bestow all possible exertion, that they may succeed in producing their desirable end.

This is so much the more just, as we should, secondly, consider that if our obstinacy renders this means ineffectual, our ruin appears assured and inevitable. We have sinned, and God, to lead us to repentance, has addressed to us his word, the first and most natural means appointed to produce this effect. To this first means, which could not subdue the hardness of our hearts, he has added a second, his patience, his long-suffering, his temporal and spiritual blessings, with which he has not failed to load us. This second means has not been more effectual than the first, and God has had recourse to a third, which is, his chastisement. If this should fail, what hope, what resource remains for us? Is not our salvation hopeless? Is not our ruin inevitable? There is still another danger to which we are exposed,

which, though less than the preceding, deserves, notwithstanding, that we should guard against it. It is, that we draw not upon ourselves a more severe chastisement than that we already endure. In fact, it is natural to persuade ourselves, that if the first stripes which God inflicts are ineffectual, he will inflict those which are more severe and heavy. This is what CHRIST teaches the blind man whom he had healed when he found him in the temple, — “*Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.*” (John v. 14.) This is to say very plainly, that new sins would incur new chastisements, but chastisements more severe and insupportable than the first. When we are sick, we desire to be healed; but how can we hope for this if we profit not by the evil which we suffer? Should we not take away the cause if we wish to remove the effect? Thus, the wrath of God being the true cause of our afflictions, and this wrath being provoked only by our sins, should we not renounce and forsake these sins if we desire that God should be reconciled to us, and withdraw his chastising hand? And by taking another course do we not oblige him, not merely to continue, but to aggravate the severity of his discipline? Thus, whenever God afflicts us, we should apply to ourselves what CHRIST said on another occasion to the angel of the Church of

the Laodiceans, — “ *As many as I love I rebuke and chasten; be zealous, therefore, and repent.*” (Rev. iii. 19.)

PRAYER.

O LORD, my GOD and merciful Father, I cast myself before thee in humble prostration of soul, to confess, that if the affliction I am called to suffer is a chastisement which my sins have occasioned, as I have great reason to fear, this must be necessarily an evidence of thine infinite goodness, and not of thy severe justice. If thou hadst designed to punish me as I have deserved, my calamities would have been altogether more severe and insupportable than they are. What are they in comparison of my offences? These offences are great in number; they are, besides, very atrocious, as well in their nature as by reasons which ought to have estranged me from them, and also by the perfect conviction which I have had of their opposition to thy will and to my duty; as also finally by those helps which thou hast afforded, to give me the means of avoiding them. Having disregarded such considerations, and without hesitation having offended against thy divine majesty, in the repeated violation of thy holy law, have I not deserved, not merely

these light afflictions, not merely these mild evidences of thy paternal indignation, but the more severe inflictions of thy formidable vengeance.

I am entirely convinced, O my God, and I freely confess it with confusion. Thus, far from complaining of thy severity, I feel myself infinitely indebted to thine unspeakable goodness, and with my whole heart I thank thee for the gracious care which thou hast condescended to take of my salvation. I thank thee that thou hast not left me to perish in my sins. But, O LORD, these favors thou hast granted me will be useless, and worse than useless to me, and will render me only the more inexcusable, unless thou wilt add one favor still, which I will now take the freedom to ask.

It is, O my God, the inward help of thy Holy Spirit, which is so needful to sanctify to me the afflictive dispensations of thy providence, to cleanse me of my sins, and to deliver me from all those solicitations of my corrupt nature which would seduce me from the way of peace. Thou knowest, merciful Father, that I shall never fulfil this great duty without thine assistance. Thou knowest my frailty and my instability. Thou hast grace more than sufficient to give me the power to do what I ought, and what I never could do of myself. Grant me, then, thy divine aid, O

my God: shed abroad upon my heart and mind all the lights and influences of thy Holy Spirit: change me, reform me, renew me by thy grace, that whatever may be the result of this my trial in the present life, it may be always attended with a sincere renunciation of myself and of my sins, and with a sincere attachment to thee alone and to thy holy will. Give me to derive this benefit from the pain I suffer, and grant that if my body is weakened, my soul may be strengthened; and *“though the outward man decayeth, that the inward man may be renewed day by day.”* Sovereign Physician, heal my soul, so dangerously sick, and put a speedy end to my distress. Give me the strength and health which are necessary to work with success in thy service and for my salvation. May the bodily suffering with which thou hast been pleased to visit me, serve this important end. All things work together for good to those who love and fear thee; all things can be made useful in thy hands. Grant that this affliction with which I am tried, may prove a timely visitation, serving efficaciously to detach me from myself, and to attach me wholly unto thee. Hear me, O my God, in the name and through the infinite merits of thy Son, who hath taught us to pray unto thee, saying,

Our Father, &c.

CHAPTER III.

THIRD REFLECTION — IT IS POSSIBLE GOD HAS DESIGNED OUR
SICKNESS TO DETACH US FROM EARTH.

ONE of the principal uses of afflictions in general, and of sickness in particular, is to detach us from earth, and to cut the ties which bind us here. I have already remarked, that the excessive attachment which we evince for the world and its transient advantages, is the most efficient and general cause of all our trouble. The greater part of our sins are rivulets, which take their rise from this source. The desire which we have to acquire these advantages, the fear of losing them, the manner in which we possess them, or rather in which we allow ourselves to possess them, all this produces, on the one hand, our negligence for salvation, and on the other, the small reluctance with which we are led into the greatest excesses, and consequently to do all in our power in the work of our own destruction. Hence it is that God so earnestly recommends us to correct this excessive attachment for these vain objects. He forbids us to love the world, or the things of it; assuring us that if we love the world, his love

is by no means in us. He teaches us that there is nothing but himself alone which should be the legitimate object of the affections of our hearts; that he alone can satisfy them and make them happy; and that every thing else will serve only to increase our calamity. But although his word so often and so clearly presents to us all these truths, we cannot persuade ourselves of them; and all the weight of his authority, all the certainty of his word, all the impossibility of the failure of his truth, hinders us not from remaining always as much fascinated with the world, as much possessed with its love, as if God had assured us quite the contrary. What can we have that is calculated to recover us from such an error? Nothing is better for this purpose than afflictions. They convince us of the vanity and worthlessness of the advantages of the world: they make us see this truth, or rather they make us feel, appreciate, and prove it. How, for instance, can we doubt this in our sickness? Do we not then see with the highest degree of evidence, the little solidity there is in these earthly blessings? Can they, in fact, assuage our ills? Do they prevent the pain from being so acute and difficult to endure? Thus is not our blindness extreme, if this proof which we have of their

worthlessness does not fully convince us, and entirely disgust us?

Besides, in proportion as we are at ease in this world will be the pain and reluctance with which we leave it. The pleasures we taste, the conveniences we find, are so many chains which bind us to it, and which hinder us from directing elsewhere our desires and our hopes. In fact, every one sufficiently understands of himself, that the more the life which he leads is soft and voluptuous, the greater effort will it cost him to resolve to die, and none will find it difficult to persuade himself that death would appear altogether more frightful to the wicked rich man, who was tasting so many pleasures, than to Lazarus, who was overwhelmed with so many sufferings. Who, then, can doubt but that one of the reasons which occasions that God should from time to time afflict his children, may be the design which he has to detach them from the earth, and to give other objects to their love and to their desires? Who can doubt but that it was intended to lead them to adopt the language of the Prophet, "*Wo is me that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar; O, when shall I come and appear before God?*"*

* Ps. cxx. 5, and xlii. 2.

This also was the idea of St. Paul when he said to the Corinthians, "*We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened, not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.*" Now this burthen, under which St. Paul says the believer groans, is doubtless his sufferings and afflictions. Thus they serve to inflame our desires for that consolation and relief which future glory holds out to our immortal hope. I hence conclude, that the first thought we should entertain when we are sick should be, that God thus designs to afford us the means of detaching our hearts from the world, and to correct that excessive love which we indulge for its advantages. But if this is so, should we not use our utmost endeavors to correspond with so gracious a design? Should it not be with confusion that we see God condescending to such a remedy to heal so shameful and so criminal an infirmity? Should we not say that great shame is due to us who, for such a length of time, should have belonged to the school of CHRIST, without learning one of the first and easiest of lessons? What sort of Christians are we if we are yet ignorant that the world has no true nor solid advantages; and if, after all that God has said to assure us thereof, we are so prepossessed and infatuated as to require such methods for our

instruction and correction? We have doubtless occasion for such a self-reproach; but what will this avail if a remedy of so powerful and so effectual a nature should not heal us of this evil? of what avail will it be if even in our bed of pain and infirmity, if in the midst of these evidences of the vanity of earthly things, if in the very time in which God is working in this way to disgust us with these dangerous things, we should still remain delighted and engrossed by them, would it not appear by this that our spiritual maladies are absolutely incurable?

If, then, we have delayed thus to improve the dispensations of God, we should at least now set about the work of withdrawing our affections from the earthly object, whatever it may be, which is so unworthy to engage them. We should consider that it is a miserable degradation, and wholly inconsistent with the eminent dignity of children of God, and heirs of his glory and kingdom, thus to debase ourselves, and subject ourselves to the bondage of things so abject and contemptible. I might here add several other considerations, which, however, may be found in the meditation after the seventh chapter of the second book.

CHAPTER IV.

FOURTH REFLECTION — IT IS VERY POSSIBLE THAT GOD DEPRIVES US OF OUR HEALTH BECAUSE WE MAKE A BAD USE OF IT.

To afford any ground of complaint that God should take from us the blessing of health, it would be necessary that this health belonged to us of right, and that we should have in it a title of domain and proprietaryship. For if it belongs not to us, but to God, there is not only injustice, but absurdity in taking it amiss that he disposes of it as he pleases, and that he deprives us of it when he finds it no longer convenient to extend it. It is, notwithstanding, true that our health belongs absolutely to him, as every thing else. It is not our own work, it is a donation of his liberality and an effect of his power. He has given it to us. But this gift is not absolute, it is not an entire transfer of property: he has always reserved to himself a supreme authority, and this right of sovereignty is even so essential to him, that it is impossible he should ever renounce it. It is indispensably necessary that he should retain and preserve it, and that every thing should be

subject to him, without reserve or exception. Thus, then, if he take from us this gift, he exercises only his right, and we have no possible ground of complaint.

But this is not all: God has given us life and health only under certain conditions. It is not that we should use it as we please; it is to employ it in certain uses which he has marked out: consequently, whenever we apply it to other purposes, whether innocent or criminal, he does us no injustice when he deprives us of it.

These uses to which he would have us apply our life and health, consist in employing them in doing his will, in observing his holy precepts, in serving and glorifying him, in doing good to our brethren and in laboring for our salvation, in correcting our vices, and by degrees acquiring those virtues which are most necessary to put us in a condition of one day possessing his kingdom. Here is the only lawful use that we can make of these advantages. To apply them to other things is to abuse them. It is to go contrary to the intention and declaration of God, consequently, it is to give him new occasion to deprive us of them, besides the distinct and sovereign right which he possesses over all things.

Before we complain, therefore, of our maladies, let us see what use we have made of our health.

If we enter upon this examination we shall certainly discover three things. The first is, that the least part of our life is that in which we have been employed in the service of God and in doing the remainder of those things in which I have said he wills us to be engaged. To convince us without difficulty, it is not necessary that we should retrace all our life past, from our birth to the present moment. This would be a long, and almost impossible work. It will be sufficient in all this space of time to take only a single year, or only a single day; it will be sufficient to observe how we pass the four-and-twenty hours which compose one of these days; we shall see that the smallest part of all this is that which we employ in the immediate service of God.

The second discovery which we shall make is, that we employ a considerable part of this time, either in actions which in their nature are criminal; in offending God, whom we should adore; in violating that law which we are bound to observe; in injuring our neighbor, whose interests should be as dear to us as our own; in the indulgence of our passions, or in throwing each day new obstacles in the way of our salvation.

Finally, we shall observe, the far greater part of our life is passed in those occupations which are, more or less, vain and useless, and whatever

they may be, very different from those which God has prescribed for us. We shall see that idleness, amusements, useless discourse, unnecessary visits, worldly conversation, a concern for dress, and such like things, occupy nearly the whole of our life.

I do not now inquire whether such a mode of living is calculated to prepare us for a good account to God at the last day, of our health and life, and whether we have reason to hope he will excuse all this. This is, indeed, a question of great importance, but not one which here concerns us to consider. We are here only engaged to know whether all those uses which we are pleased to make with our health and life, being so different from those which God has required, and for which purposes alone he has given us these two blessings, we can have any ground to complain that he deprives us of them, or that he either makes death succeed life, or sickness to prevail over health.

As this is very evident, I shall add two reflections, which I consider no less incontestible. The first is, that instead of complaining that God should deprive us of health, we have reason for astonishment that he should have allowed it so long. There is here in fact a subject of admiration perfectly incomprehensible until we reflect

that his patience and long-suffering exceed all imagination, being the consequences and evidences of his unbounded mercy.

The second reflection which I have said is incontestible is, that since the bad use we have made of our health has brought upon us our sickness, we ought to make a good use of our sickness, if we desire that God would restore our health. We should take a firm and constant resolution to serve God, and to glorify him in either of these states, and to relinquish those miserable ways which lead us only to the fearful punishments of a long-provoked justice, and even in this world, disturb our repose by the reproaches of conscience.

PRAYER.

I cannot, O LORD, complain, that I no longer enjoy that, which it hath pleased thee to take away from me. Thou hast taken it away, because I so grossly abused thy gift. Thy blessings have been in my hands converted only into instruments of offence, particularly my health, my strength, my liberty of action, have been miserably consumed, amid I know not how many occupations; some of them vain, useless and unworthy to engage the few fleeting moments of one who

persuades himself that he belongs to the number of thy children; and others of my pursuits have been decidedly criminal. What then can be more reasonable, than that I should be deprived of blessings which I have so unworthily abused, and be reduced to that state of weakness, languishing and suffering in which I at present find myself. And what occasion, what pretext, what shadow of reason can I have for complaint or murmuring? Thou art just, O LORD, and thy judgments are justice and equity itself; particularly that which thou dost display toward me, is such, that I must assent to it with my whole heart.

But, LORD, if still I may be permitted to supplicate thee for that of which it was so just thou shouldest deprive me, I take at least the liberty to pray that it might please thee to preserve for me, that which remains so precious to my best and immortal hopes.

I speak of thy love, O gracious God, that love of which the care thou dost take to humble me, is so convincing an evidence; and which, besides, is so great in value, that if I can possess it, I may boast of having lost absolutely nothing. What in fact, is health, in comparison of this love, which infallibly confers, not health, but life eternal, perpetual felicity to those who are its objects? Preserve these to me, this unspeakable gift, O

Holy Father, however worthy I may be to lose it. Or rather, avert such a calamity by restraining me by the tender care of thy providence, and by the effectual working of thy Spirit, that I may never do any thing which might lead to thy hatred, succeeding the goodness thou hast ever manifested toward me. To this end, give me to respond on my part, to this love, by a very profound respect, by a lively gratitude, by an ardent zeal for thy glory, by strong exertion to serve thee and to do thy will, in a word, by an exact observance of all the duties to which thy benefits oblige me. Dispose of me in all other respects as thou wilt; whether I live or die, whether sick or healed, thy holy will be done. But, whatever may happen, grant LORD, that I may love thee, that I may fear thee, and that I may serve thee ever, and “*that neither death, nor life, nor things present, nor things to come,*” may ever separate me from the love which thou hast borne for me in thy Son. It is in the name, and by the intercession of this thy Son, that I beseech thee to grant me these inestimable favors.

CHAPTER V.

SOME OTHER REFLECTIONS WHICH WE SHOULD MAKE IN
SICKNESS.

THERE are some other reflections which I shall briefly enumerate in this chapter. First, the Scriptures generally style our afflictions, trials : this is particularly the name which the Apostle, St. Peter, applies to them. “*Beloved,*” says he, “*think it not strange, concerning the fiery trial which is to try you.*” And again, “*that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honor and glory, at the appearing of JESUS CHRIST.*”*

The reason of this is, that nothing so clearly exhibits the true character as afflictions ; this can be concealed and disguised while we remain in the enjoyment of health ; but suffering obliges us to discover what we are ; consequently, whenever God afflicts us, however he does it, we ought to think that it is very possible he has the intention of which I am speaking, and in fact that his

* 1 Pet. iv. 12, and i. 6, 7.

design is to try us. It is not that he requires this trial in order to obtain a knowledge of us, he sees the very thoughts of our hearts. But he would make them known to others, and to ourselves. He desires we should give our brethren examples of constancy and fortitude to edify them, and to make them see what a nature so weak and fallible as ours is capable of while sustained by grace, and directed by the lights of the Gospel. He would also give us the opportunity of seeing our own hearts; he would make us know all our infirmities, and every thing that is unjust or criminal in our most secret thoughts, thus leading us first to humble ourselves and to acknowledge the injustice and falsehood of that good opinion which we have of ourselves, and also to take the necessary care to correct ourselves and to reform that which this trial teaches us was found contrary to our duty.

If such is the intention of God, as there is nothing which forbids us to believe, should we not strive on our part to correspond to [this his gracious intention, and study not only to avoid offending our neighbor by our passions and by our complaints, but to edify them by our firmness and constancy? Should we not also humble ourselves and confess our nothingness? Above all,

should we not seek to correct the imperfections we are enabled to perceive?

VI. It is very possible that God has not deprived us of health for any other reason than to hinder us from committing some great sin, into which we should have fallen if our health had been continued. We shall have no difficulty in adopting this persuasion if we consider the following truths.

1. Our frailty is extreme, and there is no sin, however debasing or dangerous, of which we are incapable, if God should leave us to ourselves.
2. Sin, particularly when aggravated, is the most terrible of calamities: sickness, the loss of property, or of reputation, bear no comparison with this.
3. We can have no concern of greater importance than an escape from such calamities.
4. Consequently, it is difficult to imagine a more distinguished proof of the love of God, than that which he gives us when he prevents us from falling into those sins which we should commit without the help of his grace.
5. It is easy to perceive that sickness is one of the best means to hinder us from committing certain sins to which we are constitutionally inclined.

6. The persuasion is then very natural, that perhaps it is with this design that God sends us the greater part of our sickness, since we moreover

know that his providence is continually engaged in promoting our salvation. Let us suppose, then, that it is with such an intention that God has sent us our present affliction. Under a conviction of this, should we not esteem ourselves happy to suffer it, and are we not infinitely obliged to the goodness of God for this his visitation? Is it not our duty to offer him our thanks, and would it not evince extreme insensibility to murmur or complain?

What though the means which God employs to save us from impending calamity should be grievous and intolerable to the flesh; it should be sufficient to know that it is for our advantage, and that this remedy has in it more utility than bitterness. When a man is in danger of drowning, and is seized by the hair of his head, we consider it an act of benevolence, and it would by none be judged otherwise. Why, then, should we not form the same conclusion upon the Divine dispensation, which, taking away the health of the body, thereby prevents the loss of the soul?

VII. It is also very possible that God afflicts us with sickness because this appears to be a fit method for creating in our soul the virtues we want, and that are so necessary for us. We well know that this kind of perfection, which consists in the combination of those qualities constituting

true sanctification, is absolutely necessary to every believer. We know there is not any virtue which it can be allowable to want; yet perhaps there is one in which we are deficient, and to supply this deficiency God has sent us affliction. Possibly by this he would humble us, he would give us the necessary firmness and constancy:—Thus reasons the Apostle; “*Tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope.*”*

VIII. It may be possible that God afflicts us in order that he may render us conformed to the character of our suffering Redeemer. Such a design is ascribed to him by the Apostle, Rom. viii. 29, where he assures us that God has “*predestinated us to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren.*” He elsewhere speaks of “*always bearing about in the body the dying of the LORD JESUS, that the life also of JESUS might be made manifest in our body.*”† CHRIST himself seems to have a view to the same idea when he declares to us that if we wish to follow him we must take up our cross. Why does he give this name to afflictions? Is it not that he may allude to the instrument of his death, and thereby to teach us

* Rom. v. 3, 4.

† 2 Cor. iv. 10.

that our greatest glory consists in a resemblance to him in this, as in all other things? But if such is the case, how great is our error, not to say injustice, if it is with regret and reluctance that we take up our cross. Are we ashamed to bear the image of CHRIST? Are we ignorant that it is the greatest honor we can possibly receive? Do we besides consider that CHRIST, having submitted himself to his cross for our salvation, it is right that we should bear ours with pleasure for his glory; and the rather so, since the weight of ours equals not that of his, all that we can suffer by his will being nothing compared with what he has suffered to reconcile us with his Father?

IX. It is moreover possible that God afflicts us to awaken our zeal and exertion. This divine flame languishes and becomes extinguished in a calm; whereas the blast of adversity and affliction relights it, and makes it to emit more light and brilliancy. We neglect ourselves in the season of health, of peace and repose: we think neither of God nor of ourselves, but afflictions fill the mind with new reflections, and effectually lead us to apply ourselves with more care to all our duties. If, then, our sickness produced only this effect, and if in the midst of our very afflictions, our faith retained its weakness; if our zeal had always so much coldness, and our soul, in a word,

its imperfections, should we not lose the advantage of these our trials, and thereby evince that our spiritual malady was absolutely incurable, since a remedy so efficacious has failed to heal it? Should we not hence endeavor to profit by God's gracious dispensations, and be able to say with the Prophet, "*It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn thy statutes.*"*

PRAYER.

My blindness would be extreme, O my God, if I could not be persuaded that what I suffer is the effect of thy will, controlled and directed by thy good providence. It is true that I know not the particular intention for which thou hast seen fit to visit me with this affliction: my ignorance of thy gracious design leads me often to neglect that cordial correspondence with thy holy will which it so highly becomes me to feel. But, LORD, thou canst supply this defect as thou canst all others; thou canst direct and incline me by thy spirit, and work in me whatever thou wouldst have me to do, to think, and to desire on this occasion. Grant this, LORD, since, knowing it even, I might fruitlessly labor without thy grace: and as I know in

* Ps. cxix. 71.

general that the state in which I find myself obliges me to humble myself before thee, to submit myself to thy holy will, to correct my imperfections and faults, and to endeavor after a nearer approach to the end of my vocation, I beseech thee, O my God, to grant that I may acquit myself faithfully of all those duties, of the necessity and justice of which I am so well persuaded. To this end grant me all the helps of thy grace, all the light and comfort of thy Spirit; in a word, all that is necessary to direct me on this occasion in a manner most agreeable to thy will, and best adapted to advance my salvation.

I know that my sins render me unworthy of this grace; but, LORD, thy holy Son, our Saviour JESUS CHRIST, has expiated them all by the shedding of his blood, and thou hast promised for his sake to grant me the remission of them, if I ask with faith and with repentance. Refuse me not, O LORD my God; and if any thing is wanting in my faith or repentance, supply it by thy grace, and by the efficacy of thine omnipotent Spirit. In a word, preserve to me, O LORD, what thou hast given me, and add whatever is deficient, and which may be necessary, since I can obtain it only through thee. I would humbly beseech thee to grant this, O LORD, for the sake of thy Son, JESUS CHRIST, our only Saviour and Redeemer.

CHAPTER VI.

REPLY TO AN OBJECTION — WHETHER IT IS PROPER THAT SICK PERSON SHOULD DESIRE TO BE HEALED, AND PRAY TO GOD FOR THIS BLESSING, AND USE EVERY MEANS FOR RECOVERY.

ALL that I have thus far said, shows us plainly that afflictions in general, and sicknesses in particular, are very useful to us, and much contribute to advance our salvation; that thus it is our duty to suffer them patiently, and far from murmuring against God, we are bound to thank him with feelings of the most lively and profound gratitude. It appears that we might hence conclude that it is not allowable for the sick either to desire their recovery, or to ask it of God, or even to take remedies to promote it; for if these maladies are so useful to us, should not our self-interest lead us to wish that they might continue, in order to derive still more advantage from them? and if God sees fit that we should suffer them, is not this directly to oppose his will, if we desire an exemption from them? Is it not an attempt to be wiser than he, and to imagine that we know better than he what is needful for us?

These consequences do seem to arise naturally from the principles I have laid down, and in fact they would be necessary if sickness were in itself useful and independent of the disposition in which we are found ; or even if we knew with certainty that God willed our sickness to continue, as we know he willed that we should be attacked with it. But as we are ignorant of the will of God in this respect ; as, besides, all the use of sickness depends upon the reference which it has to the present state of our soul ; as, finally, this reference is generally altogether unknown to us, nothing forbids us to desire our recovery, and to implore it of God ; nothing forbids us to employ every exertion, at least in a certain manner, using certain precautions.

All we may conclude from this is, in the *first place*, that when we have reason to persuade ourselves that God wills absolutely that we should die, as in fact we have reason to believe when we are attacked with an incurable disease, we ought to submit to this will of God, and not desire him to work miracles for our cure. In the *second place*, it hence follows, that it is never allowable for the sick to ask absolutely and unreservedly for their recovery. In fact, I cannot conceive how this can be done without disrespect for the wisdom of God, and without falling into the fault indicated by the

objection. To ask absolutely and unreservedly that God would heal us, is to presuppose, that all things well considered, it would be more for our advantage to be healed than to be any longer sick. To presuppose the contrary, and not to cease praying for recovery, would not such a course be acting contrary to our true interest, and to be wanting in the care we should take of ourselves? But again, on the other hand, can we, without temerity, pronounce decidedly that it is more advantageous to be healed than to be sick? We are not sufficiently acquainted, either with our true interests, or with our condition, or with our heart, or with the precise degree of utility which health and sickness can have in the situation wherever we are found by them. Could any one say positively I must have such or such a thing? Such or such a thing is more useful and more necessary to me than another? And what if God judge otherwise? What if he decide that sickness is more profitable to us than health? With such a supposition, would we have him follow rather our own caprice than the light of his wisdom, and the emotions of his mercy and goodness? Would we have him send us what is most agreeable instead of what is most useful? Besides, who knows not that in order that our prayers may be heard, they should be offered in faith? and what

faith, what assurance or confidence can we have, if we ask unreservedly for things which, on the one hand, might prove pernicious, and on the other might be contrary to the will of God. Such considerations as these must lead us to the conclusion that a sick person should never unreservedly request nor desire to be healed: but on the other hand, nothing forbids that he should ask and desire it conditionally, adding always this reservation, expressed or understood, — that he asks not nor desires recovery, except as it may be useful and profitable to him; and the rest he leaves to the wisdom and mercy of God, to decide which of the two, health or sickness, is the most useful.

There is also a particular kind of petition, which is entirely innocent, although it is offered without reservation. Such, for example, is that which desires some object considered in itself, without regard to circumstances. Health, considered in itself, is a desirable blessing. While contemplating this alone, and extending our views to none of those considerations which might make sickness more useful to us, nothing forbids us to desire it, nay, even to ask it of God.

This must needs be innocent, since we observe it in CHRIST himself. He was not ignorant that it was his Father's will he should die; neverthe-

less, considering this death in itself, and not in relation to the will of the eternal Father, he says, "*O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.*" But although this feeling may be innocent, while it is only momentary and unattended by any consequence, it is inconsistent when it is indulged in ever so little a time and when it is followed by action. The mind may rest for a moment upon one of the faces of the object, and excite in the soul a sudden desire. But if it pauses, however little, as it should do, when a choice should be made, and one side be preferred to the other; then we should regard this object on every side, and especially should we consider what relation it may have to God; and if he sees any consideration which gives to one side the preponderancy over the other. In this manner acted our Lord JESUS CHRIST. He was naturally inclined to wish that he might not die. But a moment after, the will of his Father presents itself to his mind; at once he listens no more to nature. He submits unreservedly to the will of the eternal Father, and adds to what he before had said, "*Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.*"* There is, therefore, a wide difference between sudden emotions, which pass

* Luke xxvi. 39.

with the utmost rapidity, and fixed, durable and permanent determinations. According to the first, we may unreservedly wish for health; but we may not, according to the other, express any desire without strictly restraining it by a condition. The same may be said of the duration, and other circumstances of our sickness. The disposition of these things must be left to the wisdom of God, and we must assure ourselves that he knows incomparably better than we, what will be most profitable for us. Thus, the more vague and undetermined our requests are in all these respects, the more conformable will they be to the will of God, and the better calculated to obtain for us whatever is necessary.

CHAPTER VII.

OF REMEDIES AND OTHER CARE WHICH SHOULD BE TAKEN FOR
RECOVERY.

SUFFICIENT has, perhaps, been said on the subject of prayers and desires. We will now speak of remedies, and other cares which we are accustomed to bestow for the recovery of health, and see if the objection proposed in the preceding chapter has more force in this second respect, than in the first.

I observe then, that in this second respect it destroys itself. It goes to show that we should be entirely undecided upon the subject of sickness and health, because we are ignorant which of the two is, on the one hand, more useful, and on the other, more conformable to the will of God. All which is true. But it does not hence follow that we should not take remedies, nor do other things which we may judge proper to promote recovery. To do nothing of this sort, would be, to resolve to be sick and to die, and consequently, this conclusion is directly opposed to the principle from which it would be made to flow. It may possibly be said, we must come to some

determination upon this subject. Either, we must act, or we must not act—which of these two alternatives shall we take? I reply, we must take that of acting, and doing all that will be available to preserve life, and to recover health: for although we are ignorant which of the two, death or life, sickness or health, is most for our good; although we know not how God will dispose of us, and thus cannot regulate our conduct by such a knowledge, yet we may easily do this by other means. We have a general law which should always serve as a rule whenever nothing particular creates an exception.

This general law ordains that we should preserve our life and our health. The reason of which is, that life and health are of themselves divine blessings, for which it is right we should feel a lively gratitude, and we shall be deficient in this if we neglect the blessings with which he favors us, and if we use not all the means in our power to preserve them.

Moreover they both give us an opportunity to promote the glory of God, the good of our neighbor, and our own salvation. Thus we are equally as much obliged to endeavor to preserve them, as we are to glorify God, to do good to our neighbor, and to labor for our own salvation; since it is certain we could not act in either of

these three designs without health and life. I hence conclude that there are three descriptions of persons who dangerously trifle with their conscience. The first are they who without any necessity go into houses where they know a contagious disease prevails, although they are not ignorant of the danger to which it exposes them: certainly to act in this manner, is to love danger, and consequently, to seek destruction, agreeably to the words of the wise man, "*He that loves danger shall perish thereby.*"* It is to contradict the principles of sound reason, which would have us use every exertion to shun the evil, particularly an evil so terrible as this. I see only two pretexts by which such daring conduct can be at all defended. One, to say that our days are numbered, and that whatever we do we are not to die before the moment which God has appointed. The other, that if God pleases, he can preserve us notwithstanding the danger to which we are exposed. But if these reasons were good, they would have the same force with regard to other dangers as with regard to this. In fact, fire, shipwreck, the fall of a house, the venom of a serpent, the bite of a rabid animal, and other causes which could take away our life,

* Eccles. iii. 26.

are as little able to change the decrees of God as a pestilence. God could as easily protect us from all these dangers, as from contagious disease ; consequently, if these two reasons were good, it would be allowable to enter into a house and remain there, though we should see it was about falling, or that it was enveloped in flames ; we might embark in a crazy vessel which was deemed certain of shipwreck, and we need not defend ourselves against the attack of a viper or of a rabid animal. In a word, there would be no danger to which we might not freely expose ourselves. As all these inferences are absurd and unwarrantable, we must of necessity perceive that the principles from which they are drawn have no foundation, and cannot be sustained by truth. And it is certain, also, that they are not in reality what they may seem to be. For in regard to the first, it is true our days are numbered ; but this they may be in a variety of ways ; and we are far from knowing in what manner they are numbered. To presume on the existence of a matter so obscure and contested as this, as a principle for the regulation of our practice, is, in my esteem of it, an imprudence perfectly inexcusable. St. Paul knew, not only in general that the days of those who sailed with him were numbered, but also that they would all escape from

shipwreck. Nevertheless he ceases not to exhort them to use every exertion for their safety, and he says to the centurion, speaking of the sailors, "*If these remain not in the ship ye cannot be saved.*" The conviction we have of the immutability of the Divine decrees should not hinder us from acting. I say the same thing of the Divine power. It is very certain that God could preserve from pestilence a man who goes into the infected districts, whatever might be his predisposition to receive it. But it is also true that if he did this it would be a miracle ; this would be a subversion of the laws which he has established. Therefore to pretend that God might preserve us from such danger is to pretend that he would work a miracle.

But to expose ourselves to danger that God may work a miracle, is not this presumptuously to tempt him ?

Is it not true that it is in this that theologians make sin to consist ; and is not this doctrine which they teach, founded in those words of our Saviour, who when the devil proposed that he should cast himself from the pinnacle of the temple, upon the hope that angels would bear him up in their hands, replies, "*Get thee hence, Satan ; it is written, thou shalt not tempt the LORD thy God.*" It would have been to tempt

God then, to do what the devil proposed. Thus the devil proposing that he should voluntarily expose himself to danger in hope of a miracle, it is plain that all who do this tempt God.

Would it not be to tempt God if we should cast ourselves into a fiery furnace, in the hope of experiencing a miracle similar to that which preserved the three young Hebrews in the furnace of Babylon? Is it not then to commit the same sin, when we enter infected districts with the hope that God will preserve us from infection. That which we should promise ourselves in both these instances would be a miracle; and what is more, a miracle of the same kind, and which would consist in the suspension of the general laws by which nature is regulated; it would only be to suspend the operation of these laws, and fire would no longer burn, and it would require only the same influence to preserve a body predisposed to pestilence from taking it by visiting the infected district.

The second description of persons who violate the rules I have here laid down, are sick persons in general. They insist upon being allowed certain food which in their situation would be highly injurious, and however they are warned of the danger to which they are exposed, they yield not

to persuasion, and are even offended if their request is not granted.

I maintain that if they have the free use of their reason, they are guilty of a grievous sin. In fact they expose themselves to a danger sufficiently great to aggravate their disease, and consequently to destroy their life; and they thus expose themselves by the single desire of pleasure which they imagine this food would communicate; that is to say, they carry intemperance to its last extremity.

The third description of persons who violate the rules here laid down, are certain sick persons, who, doubting not the utility of many remedies, refuse to take them because they are inconvenient or disagreeable. A slight inconvenience appears more terrible to them than sickness, and all its consequences. In which course it is evident they sin against the light of good sense and against the maxims of piety: for good sense would teach us to suffer a smaller evil, that we may avoid a greater. Thus there being no comparison between the disagreeableness of remedies and the danger to which we would be exposed by refusing to take them, it is evidently an offence against the common dictates of judgment to prefer running into this danger, rather than to endure what might be disagreeable in these remedies.

But a more serious consideration is, that we sin against the maxims of piety, and inflict a dangerous wound upon conscience; in fact, conscience obliging us to preserve our life, we cannot refuse to do what we judge useful to this end without opposing its dictates, and thus incurring a grievous sin. On this ground I maintain that there is no prescription so disagreeable or so painful, to which we should not submit when occasion may require. Thus, when mortification has commenced in a hand or foot, and there is no other way to save the life than amputation of an arm or a leg, it is then the duty of the patient readily to submit to it.

It surely will not be said that life should not be preserved at so high a price. Such a sentiment might be expected from Pagans or Atheists, who judge only of life by what it is in itself. Christians, who consider it less in itself than as a blessing of God, which his word obliges us to preserve with care, and which we cannot willingly lose without great sin; who consider it, moreover, as a means of advancing the glory of God and their own salvation, judge quite otherwise, and feel that there is nothing so harsh or grievous which they should not do and suffer to preserve it. It is sufficient for them to know that it is God's will; nothing more is required to produce their entire

submission: for on the one hand, the respect which we should have for his will should be unlimited; and on the other, it would be an extreme affront to him that we should refuse doing that in obedience to him which we would not hesitate to do from other principles. The most abandoned profligates will suffer these same operations merely from the love which they have for life? Why should not Christians suffer them from a principle of love to God?

PRAYER.

I cast myself before thy feet, merciful Father, to implore thy compassion, and that it may please thee to give me a realizing sense of it. I have only this resource to preserve me from perishing for ever; and I well perceive that if here I should be found wanting, my trouble would be absolutely without remedy. I know that I am a sinner, and that which I suffer, and which proves it so clearly, was by no means necessary to convince me of this humiliating truth. My own conscience, and the evidence of the thing itself allowed me not to doubt it. I am also of myself powerfully persuaded of it, O my God. But this is not all: I know that I am a great sinner; and when I reflect upon the innumerable faults into which I have

fallen, the circumstances that attended them, thy greatness and goodness, which required that I should take so much care to please thee, and much more to avoid offending thee; the knowledge I had of thy will and of my duties; finally, of the helps thou hast given me, and of the graces I have received from thee, I am convinced that my unworthiness is extreme, and that there is nothing so fearful in thy vengeance which I have not merited; and with my whole heart I confess that my punishment is far less than my sins have deserved.

I beseech thee deal not with me after my sins, nor reward me according to my iniquities; give unto me perfect remission and forgiveness of all those sins which have stained my past life. Grant me this grace, not for works of righteousness which I have done, but for what thy Son hath done and suffered for me. Hath he not expiated my sins by the sacrifice of himself? hath he not indemnified thy justice by the perfect satisfaction which he hath offered? Doth not his blood shed for me, speak better things than the blood of Abel, and is it not always the same in efficacy to purify and sanctify my soul? Hear, O gracious God, the voice of this precious blood, which more persuasively solicits thy mercy for me than my sins can call for thy justice to punish me. Holy

Father, receive me into thy peace and favor; open to me the arms of thy eternal compassions, and also grant me freely all the helps and all the graces I shall need in that estate into which it hath pleased thee to call me. I ask not unreservedly for health: it may be that it is a less benefit to me than sickness: I know not which most I need; but I am persuaded that thou knowest, and that thou seest it very distinctly. As to this, then, I would resign myself wholly to thine infinite wisdom and mercy, and I beseech thee to grant, not what the blind inclination of nature can lead me to wish to ask of thee, but that which thou thyself shalt judge most needful for me. What I desire most unreservedly, O my God, is thy love and thy compassions, the continued care of thy good providence, the light and graces of thy Spirit.

Thou knowest my necessity, and that if it should please thee to refuse me, I should be utterly lost. Refuse me not, merciful Redeemer of men, howsoever unworthy I may be to receive it. Enlighten my mind, reform my will, sanctify my heart, strengthen my faith, inflame my love, and in a word, give me all that is necessary for me, on the one hand, to receive as I ought the affliction with which it hath pleased thee to visit me, and on the other, to profit by it, and draw

from it those advantages which thou hast appointed as the fruits of sanctified affliction.

These things I humbly beg through the merits and mediation of **JESUS CHRIST**, our most blessed Lord and Saviour.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SICKNESS BY WHICH WE ARE ATTACKED MAY BE MORTAL,
OR MAY BECOME SO.

THE reflections which have been made in the preceding chapters are very important, and may produce very salutary effects. But they are by no means as important as this last. This is the most necessary and considerable of all. It is one which both merits and demands the most earnest consideration of the mind.

I desire, then, that from the first approach of any sickness with which we may be attacked, we impress our minds deeply with the conviction, that it is very possible this is our last sickness, and that it will ere long terminate in death. I do not require that we should suppose we positively shall die of this sickness. It can never be the duty of a wise and good man to persuade himself positively of a thing that may be unfounded or false; I desire only that we should persuade ourselves that this is possible, and that we have not, I will not say any certainty, but any reason, however small, to assure ourselves of the contrary. Let it not be replied that the sickness does not

appear dangerous: may it not be so, without seeming thus to be? and though now it may not be, can it not become so hereafter? Does not this constantly occur, and who has not seen many instances of it? We may die suddenly in perfect health, and why then may we not die in any sickness? But such being the case, should we not take the same precautions as if we knew we should surely die? In fact, it is a sound maxim, to be observed in every thing, but chiefly in concerns of conscience, that in doubtful and uncertain things we should adopt those which are most sure. We should always hazard as little as possible: therefore, who sees not that in preparing for death we hazard nothing, whereas we hazard every thing by neglecting such a preparation? Let us suppose, that after having done all we are able to prepare for death, we do not die, and are restored from a sickness which we supposed to be mortal; what have we lost? Some cares, some efforts of mind, it may possibly be said: But besides that such a loss would be very trifling, I maintain that it is no loss.

These cares and efforts have been very usefully employed. If they were such as they should have been, they were very acceptable to God. He has certainly rewarded them with some spiritual blessing, and with a new supply of spiritual grace.

We have made considerable progress in sanctification, and we are more and more assured of the possession of the heavenly inheritance. Is this, then, to labor unavailingly?

It would not be thus if the sickness, unfeared and unimproved, should be followed by death. In this case it would be found that we had hazarded every thing; or more properly speaking, that we had lost every thing; since we should have lost ourselves. This calamity being so terrible and so irreparable, should we not take all the precautions possible to avoid it? and can we neglect them without departing from the rules of wisdom, though the exertions required of us should be incomparably greater and more difficult than they are? I desire, therefore, that as soon as we are attacked with sickness, we should consider it as a powerful admonition, which God gives us to think of him, and as a solemn engagement to labor promptly and unremittingly, that we may be placed in a suitable condition for dying in a holy and Christian manner. This truth may be illustrated by two considerations. First, that it is very possible though we may not die so soon, we may previously lose the use of our reason, and thus be unable to seek our salvation. It requires only a little fever to derange the whole machinery of the mind. The loss of reason may be partial

only, and not total; but there are few diseases that do not more or less enfeeble the mind, and they who often see the sick can easily observe it. This may not amount to actual alienation and delirium, but it rarely occurs that the mind retains all that liberty and power which belongs to it in health. We should not, then, wait till such an hour as this; and it is well to employ in the great concern of salvation the best moments for the important work, and these certainly are the first. Another consideration, which proves the same thing, is, that however we might be sure of preserving to the end the use of our reason, and all the power of the mind, there would not still be a moment to lose, because in fact what we undertake is of such a nature as to demand all the time we can have.

Many suppose that we need but a moment to labor with success, and on this ground, they delay as long as possible to put their hand to the work; flattering themselves continually that they shall yet have time sufficient. The error arises from an unworthy, confused, and imperfect idea of conversion, as also of piety, and in general of every thing necessary for salvation. If the doctrine of our renewal from sin to holiness, were more distinctly known: if the weakness of our nature for the acceptable performance of our

duty, and indeed for the least things that concern our salvation, were more fully realized, we should be at no loss to persuade ourselves that there is no moment so short that we can lose without extreme imprudence. We should therefore proceed promptly to action, and rally all our strength and exertion that we may omit nothing which might be necessary. But shall it be said, What must be done with such an intention? This is what we should consider with great care, and it is what we shall attempt to do in the following book. I shall here only observe that before all things we should implore the help of God with all possible zeal and ardor; neither the necessity nor the propriety of this duty needs demonstration here; this I have pointed out in the fourth chapter of the first book: the following prayer will be found suitable for the present occasion.

PRAYER.

O LORD, my gracious God and merciful Saviour, however unworthy I am of thy remembrance and of thy providential care, it hath pleased thee to think effectually of me, and to visit me in thy grace and in thy love with the sickness which attacks me. Not to speak of the other ends

which this charitable visitation may have in view for me, and which merits a lively and deep gratitude for thy goodness, thou hast warned me thereby of my mortality. I am not ignorant of it, O my God, but I acknowledge to thee with grief and with shame, that I think not of it as I ought. A thousand vain objects have occupied my thoughts, a thousand distractions have banished this important subject. For ever blessed, therefore, be thy name, that it hath pleased thee to relieve me from these distractions, and to oblige me by some means to think of myself. Thou couldst without difficulty, abandon me to my miserable conduct; thou couldst permit that death might take me away unexpectedly, and without warning, as it daily takes so many others, by so many and inevitable accidents. I have doubtless merited this; what thanks then, do I not owe thee, that I am thus distinguished from those with whom I was confounded too much by my evil conduct! can I think without transport of that infinite and inexhaustible goodness which instead of leaving me to myself, directs me in a manner so mild and so merciful! I praise thee for it, I bless thee for it, O my God; with my whole heart I thank thee for this new evidence of thy love, which appears neither less remarkable, nor less precious than any of the

others I have received in the whole course of my life. But as gratitude exhausts not the duties which this favor imposes on me, as I must endeavor besides to acknowledge it by profiting from the warning thou hast given me, and disposing me in a holy and Christian manner to present myself before thee ; as, finally, the work is too great for strength so limited as mine, or rather for impotence so absolute as that which I feel to do the least thing without thy help, I fly unto thee, O my God, and implore with all the ardor I can feel, thy fatherly and merciful help.

With my whole heart, I beseech thee, that it may please thee to instruct me what I must do on this occasion, and above all that thou wouldst give me grace to perform it.

Direct me, merciful Redeemer of men. Sustain me, strengthen me, and work in me what thou seest good, and what I should never of myself be able to do. Proportion thy help to the extreme necessity in which I am. Thou seest well, O my God, that this help which I could never attain is exceedingly needful to me on this occasion ; thou seest that it extends to all my salvation, that it extends to all eternity, which shall be happy or miserable according to the use which I shall make of the little moment of mercy which is left me ; thou seest, finally, that left to

myself, and deprived of thine assistance, I shall do nothing but what would destroy me. But, my God, all things are easy with thy help, thy grace is sufficient for me. Wilt thou refuse it to me, O merciful Father? Can it be that thou wilt not grant it me, after having given me thy Son, who is the source, the author and the dispenser of it. Will thou refuse it to my humble petitions, after having granted me the first evidences of it, in a time when far from wishing them, I opposed them obstinately, and labored to banish thy holy inspiration. No, my God, I fear not this calamity; I expect all of thy goodness, and upon this hope I proceed to labor, under thy direction, in this important work, the happy success of which would be an eternal monument of thine infinite mercy. Let thy mercy be upon me, as my trust is in thee. In thee, O LORD, have I trusted, let me never be confounded. I humbly beseech thee to grant this for the sake of thy Son JESUS CHRIST our Saviour, in whose words I will conclude by saying,

Our Father, &c.

THE
DEATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS:
OR
THE WAY OF HOLY DYING.

BOOK IV.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE AT THE APPROACH OF DEATH.

" A BRUISED reed HE will not break,
Afflictions all his children feel ;
He wounds them for his mercy's sake,
He wounds to heal !

There is a calm for those who weep,
A rest for weary pilgrims found ;
And while the mouldering ashes sleep
Low in the ground,

The soul, of origin divine,
God's glorious image freed from clay,
In heaven's eternal sphere shall shine,
A star of day !

The SUN is but a spark of fire,
A transient meteor in the sky ;
The SOUL, immortal as its sire,
SHALL NEVER DIE."

Montgomery.



THE
DEATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

CHAPTER I.

FIRST DUTY OF A MAN WHO WOULD BE PREPARED FOR DEATH
—HE SHOULD SEND FOR A MINISTER OF GOD.

I SUPPOSE the case of a person resolved to neglect nothing that lies in the compass of his power, in preparing for death, as well because he regards his sickness as mortal, as because he believes only that it may possibly become so; with either of these views, I proceed to show as plainly as possible, what I consider such a person can and ought to do that he may die in the favor and love of God.

I believe then, in the first place, that he should call in his pastor and solicit from him whatever help he is able to render. In fact, humility, which is always necessary, but chiefly so at death, forbids us from supposing ourselves independent of the help of others, and surely more strictly so

on this occasion, when that which we undertake is at once most important and most difficult.

Have we neither the knowledge, nor the firmness, nor the other divine virtues of our Lord **JESUS CHRIST**? Dare we equal ourselves to this great Saviour? Yet we see that when he would prepare himself for death, he refused not the consolations and helps of an angel, which he did, apparently, not because he had any absolute need of them, but to show us what our duty is in similar circumstances.

I speak now of an authorized minister of God, and by no means would be satisfied with the helps which could be rendered by one of the laity, unless he had knowledge, and extraordinary qualifications, to acquit himself better in this duty than a minister.

As such a case seldom happens, and it is to be presumed that a minister who has devoted all his life to the study and practice of the religion of **JESUS CHRIST** has knowledge on this subject not to be expected of others, I doubt not but that on these occasions we should observe the same rule which we in other circumstances uniformly follow. When sick, we call to our aid the most skilful physician. When we have a law suit we consult the most profound jurists. Why not do the same in a concern altogether more important

than any others, and wherein to fail is to perish. They who act otherwise do so only because they are prepossessed with an error which I consider very gross and very dangerous. They suppose themselves to need assistance at death only for two things, — the one to have a man who pronounces or who recites a prayer which they may follow with their thoughts: the other to be fortified and encouraged against the fears of death. If these were the only benefits which the sick person could draw from him whose assistance is desired, I confess that for such a purpose any one might suffice. But for my part, I am persuaded that this is the least degree of assistance which he requires; there are very many others far more necessary. We must distinctly point out the acts of the soul which are to be performed: we must place each one in its own order: we require aid to discharge them in the most ardent and persevering manner: we must adapt ourselves to the various dispositions of the sick person: we must know these dispositions; ascertain what in them is good, or what in them is evil; correct and reform what is amiss; supply what is wanting; conduct, direct and regulate the whole: we must, in a word, be prepared to suit our counsel to the various persons we are called to assist; it being extremely difficult to find two persons who per-

fectly resemble one another, and have not some trait by which they may be distinguished. Can this be considered an easy work? Do we suppose that a man without study, and who is simply capable of repeating to the sick person a few texts of Scripture, selected with good or bad judgment, as it may happen, possesses merely in such a faculty all that is necessary for the work I am about describing? For myself, I am so far from believing it, that if it were my own case I should commit the work to the most skilful theologians; and I am persuaded, in fact, that such as have the most light and experience, are most likely to acquit themselves worthily in such a service. But what will it avail though a pastor have all the lights which could be desired if he is ignorant of the sick person's true state. How can he correct those faults and imperfections of which he is ignorant. I should desire, then, that the sick person hesitate not to disclose them to him, and candidly discover the hidden secrets of the heart. But on this subject I beg my reader not to confound what I wish and approve with that which the Church of Rome requires. We know the practice of the Roman Church on this point: she obliges the dying to make an exact enumeration to their confessors of all the actual sins into which they have fallen, at least since their last confes-

sion, maintaining that it is impossible to obtain remission but in this manner. This, I am well persuaded, is false doctrine, and nothing appears to me more contrary to many formal decisions of the word of God. That which I would require is quite another thing. I ask not that the sick person discover to the minister his past sins; I ask only that he let him know his present sentiments, and the true dispositions of his heart, his desires, his fears, his hopes, his frailties, his infirmities, the fondness he has for various objects. My inquiries would be directed to such things as these, with a view not that he should ask absolution of what was criminal in his conduct, but to receive his advice, and to learn of him the means of correcting whatever in him is vicious; confirm and strengthen him in whatever is good; supply what is wanting; and in one word, place him in such a state that he may die well. The Church of Rome would have the dying act with their confessor as with a judge. My desire is, that he should consult his minister as a physician, not with a view to pronounce judgment upon him, but that he may give him advice, and useful and salutary prescriptions. In order to this, I would desire two things; first, that from time to time the minister be left alone with the sick person: in fact, it is to put the humility of a sick person

to too difficult a proof, when we would oblige him before various persons to acknowledge many things very much to his disadvantage. It is sufficient if he states them to his minister. The minister himself should spare him as much as possible the confusion of such confessions. He should understand thereupon even the slightest hints, and comprehend even the most distant suggestions.

The other thing which I should desire is, that the minister help the sick person to discover what is in his soul, as well by addressing directly and formally such questions as he may judge most necessary, as more particularly by engaging him indirectly to explain himself upon subjects upon which he desires information. As to which I do not hesitate to say that the conversation employed by many on these occasions appears of little use. I place more confidence in a familiar conversation, conducted in such a manner by the minister, that he might on one hand know the true disposition of the sick person, and on the other give him the opportunity of performing all those acts which are necessary for him on such an occasion.

I need not add, that the sick person should have much docility and deference for what is said to him: as I take it for granted that nothing will be said but what is reasonable, so it must be evident

he should not neglect to profit thereby. It is proper to implore of God the grace for this improvement of his privileges, and as soon as the sick person has sent for his minister, it will not be amiss for him to address himself to God in the following prayer, or in one similar to this.

PRAYER.

My God, I submit myself with respect to the order which thou hast established: thou hast appointed an order of men whose duty it is to labor for the salvation of their fellow-men. It is from the mouth of such persons, subject to the same infirmities as ourselves, that thou hast ordained us to receive the sacred truths which ought to be the rule of our conduct. I am persuaded that this institution is worthy of thy wisdom: I therefore subject myself with pleasure to this thy divine appointment, and call one of thy servants to assist me on the present occasion. But, LORD, before he opens his lips to speak to me, I beg that it may please thee to suggest to him such discourse as it may concern me most to hear. Enlighten his mind, O my God: direct his words, and make them kindle in my heart those sentiments and dispositions which may be most useful to me. Attend every thing he shall

say with the powerful efficacy of thy Holy Spirit, without which men must speak and act in vain. Give me, moreover, to receive with all docility and humility every thing he shall say in thy name, and to consider it not as the word of man, but as thy own word, which liveth and abideth for ever.

He will approach thy throne of grace on my behalf, O my God ; but allow me first to pray for him, and to beseech thee that while laboring for my salvation, he may not himself become a cast-away. Make him to understand all the holiness and importance of his ministry in general, and this sacred duty of it in particular. Forbid that by any false compliance, and by considerations of mere flesh and blood, he should withhold from me the things he ought to say. In a word, LORD, give him prudence, strength and gentleness, and above all, that love which is necessary for the discharge of his duty on this occasion, and to acquaint me with my own ; that thus both fulfilling thy pleasure, we may both in such wise serve thee here on earth, that in the world to come we may arrive at thine eternal joy, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD.

CHAPTER II.

WE SHOULD ASCERTAIN WHETHER HE BE IN A STATE OF RECONCILIATION WITH GOD, OR WHETHER HE HAS YET TO LABOR FOR THIS IMPORTANT ATTAINMENT.

I DESIRE, then, that he who considers his sickness as probably mortal, should send forthwith for his minister. But as it may happen that we are often so situated as not to have them near us when we most need them, and as besides every Christian should know what he must do to die well, I shall now endeavor to show this as plainly as possible.

The first concern that we should have upon such an occasion is, to be assured that we are in a state of reconciliation with God, and whether we have obtained of his mercy and goodness the remission of all our sins committed from our early days to the present moment. I say that this is the first concern which merits our attention, because all others which may be necessary depend in a certain sense upon it.

In fact, we must conduct ourselves variously, according to the state in which we find ourselves, and even according to the knowledge and cer-

tainty we enjoy of it. A man who knows he is in a state of sin and condemnation, has altogether another work to perform than the child of God who is firmly assured of his adoption and of the renewal of his mind. There can be no doubt of this. Thus, the first thing we should do under such circumstances, is to inquire what is our state in this respect, and to take the necessary precautions to avoid self-deception therein; nothing, indeed, would be more pernicious than an error here. The consequences could not but be fatal. Imagine the case of the sinner, who yet subject to the bondage of the devil, vainly persuades himself, that he is truly converted from sin to holiness, renewed in the spirit of his mind; and that thus he is of the number of the children of God, vessels of his grace, and heirs of his glory. I hardly need observe, that such a case is by no means impossible, or only imaginary; we see it daily and momentarily, and nothing is more frequent or ordinary. What then is the consequence? It must naturally be, that such a person persuaded that his sins are pardoned, will do nothing to obtain this grace, and consequently will not in fact obtain it. Believing himself to be a child of God, he will not labor to become so; believing himself converted, he will be a stranger to this inestimable blessing; and

thus he will die as he lived, always the slave of vice; always subject to the devil; always the object of the Divine displeasure, and fearfully looking to the fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries.

Let us now suppose the sinner to know the dangerous condition he is in, both as he has known it through life, and as he perceives it at the approach of death. Nothing hinders him from laboring to acquire so happy a disposition, and surely the very prospect of the danger to which he is exposed will powerfully urge him forward in these endeavors: nothing, therefore, is more important than to know with certainty the true state in which we are; but I see no other way to arrive at such an assurance, than by careful self-examination, and to see whether we find in ourselves, in our life, and actions and thoughts, the characteristics which distinguish a state of grace from a state of sin, exactly following what St. Paul directs the Corinthians,—That *“every one prove his own self;”* and again, *“Prove your own selves, examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith. Know ye not your own selves, how that JESUS CHRIST is in you, except ye be reprobates?”**

* 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

I have in other works noted more at length the manner in which this examination should be conducted, and I therefore might feel myself in some degree discharged from any farther consideration of it. But as it is very possible that this treatise may fall into the hands of some who have not seen the others, and could not even read them, I will briefly touch upon the principal characteristics by which we may know our true state.

Those which are generally afforded are the following:—The thought and conviction of our natural unworthiness; a lively grief for those sins into which we may have fallen; the desire to obtain their remission by the merit of JESUS CHRIST, and by the efficacy of his precious blood; the persuasion that we cannot be saved but by this way; humble recourse to the mercy of God and to the satisfaction of his Son, to have full confidence in these two great sources of the salvation of men. These characteristics are good in a certain sense. It is certain in the first place, that they who realize them not, may assure themselves that they are not the children of God, which is a serious reflection. It is certain in the next place, that all they who have them truly, and in whom all these considerations are such as they

ought to be, can assure themselves positively of their adoption.

But it is also certain, that it is both sufficiently easy and sufficiently ordinary to be deceived herein, as well because too vague and too general an idea is formed of each one of these characteristics, as also because there are some concerning which very false ideas are formed and far distant from the truth. For instance, by a recourse to the mercy of God, and to the merit of JESUS CHRIST, we understand only a simple desire to be the object of this mercy, and to prevail by this merit; nevertheless, it is certain that this desire, however violently manifested, may find itself in the soul of the most obstinate sinners.

In the same way by trust in the mercy of God and in the merit of JESUS CHRIST, we understand an absolute confidence which has no regard to the condition under which these great blessings are offered to us on the part of God. It is certain that such a confidence, far from being an efficacious means of our salvation, is one of those things which contributes most to our ruin. I believe, therefore, that in order to avoid deception we should attend principally to three things,—

The first is, the manner in which we have recourse to the mercy of God, and to the merits of our Saviour JESUS CHRIST: If it is without

pledging ourselves to any obedience ; if it is with a desire of persevering in our vices and remaining slaves of the passions, this recourse is vain and useless, and will not avert from us the punishment of Heaven. But if it is in renouncing those sins, the remission of which we seek in these two great sources of our salvation ; if we have a desire and a sincere resolution to live more purely and holily than we have hitherto done ; if this desire and resolution are followed by execution ; if in this manner we have recourse to the mercy of God and the satisfaction of his Son, this is a certain proof that we are truly among the number of sincere believers and of the children of God. The second question which we should be careful to decide, is, whether we are engaged in any habitual sins, such as those of which St. Paul speaks in two portions of the sacred writings, (1 Cor. vi. and Gal. v.) assuring us that “ *they who do such things shall not enter into the kingdom of God ;*” for if we are in such a state, we may be well convinced that we are in a very miserable condition, and that until we are truly emancipated from the dominion of these habits, we have nothing to hope from the mercy of God, either in this life, or in that which is to come. Finally, the last, and perhaps the principal thing which should engage our attention, is to

examine whether we love God supremely, that is to say, whether any consideration or any motive, either of fear or of hope, could lead us to offend God, by known and deliberate sin. In fact, if after self-examination on these points we should be obliged to confess there was one or more of these considerations which might prevail, and which produced a fixed and persevering indifference to divine things, we might hence assure ourselves that we were not disciples of JESUS CHRIST; while on the other hand, if we should have reason to form an opposite conclusion, we might be assured that God regarded us as his children, and destined us, through the use of the proper means, to the enjoyment of his heavenly kingdom. I detain not my reader here to prove this; the discussion of this point would too much protract this work, with observations which I have made in other treatises. It will be sufficient here to say, that if we examine ourselves upon this head, such a scrutiny would lead to one of three conclusions. Either we should remain convinced that we were of the number of the true children of God, and that thus we had an incontestible right to the heavenly inheritance; or we should remain convinced that we are, and ever had been, engaged in crime, and consequently subject to all the effects of the hatred and wrath

of God; or finally, we should know what we ought to think of ourselves, because in fact we should see in our life and actions, grounds of fear, and reasons of hope, which would keep the mind in a state of suspense and uncertainty. I proceed then to show what must be done by those who find themselves in either of these three conditions.

CHAPTER III.

DUTIES OF A CHRISTIAN WHO UPON STRICT EXAMINATION
HOPES HE HAS REASON TO BELIEVE HIMSELF ONE OF GOD'S
CHILDREN.—FIRST ORDER OF THESE DUTIES.

I COMMENCE with the first, and I suppose a man, who having frequently made serious reflections upon his present state, and making them anew at the approach of death, has even been persuaded, and still persuades himself that God has marked him with his seal, and has raised him to the glorious distinction of his child. I say that this persuasion should produce in his soul various emotions which it is important to consider more distinctly.

The first, if I mistake not, and the most natural, is joy. What is indeed more natural than to rejoice, when we are well assured that we possess some considerable advantage? And can we imagine any greater or more substantial than those which the believer of whom I speak, has the happiness to boast? I say nothing even of that which he expects, and which is to follow his death. This is what will succeed as the result. I pause to consider what he has in the present,

and I maintain that wherever he directs his view he sees only subjects of satisfaction : I could here point out many : I could say with St. Paul, that all things are his ; that the angels in particular are his protectors and defenders ; that the Holy Spirit is the seal of his adoption, and the pledge of his inheritance ; that his heart is the temple of that glorious divinity which he has united so strictly to JESUS CHRIST ; that he is one and the same spirit, one and the same plant with this great Redeemer ; that he lives by his life ; that he is associated with his dignities, having been made like him king, priest and prophet. But leaving all this for the present, I shall consider only one of his advantages, which appears more than sufficient to prove all I have advanced.

He knows with certainty that God loves him ; and I here say nothing of that love of benevolence of which the impious themselves are sometimes the objects, since God grants them very great and very precious benefits, for instance, conversion. I speak of that love of complacency with which God honors only his dear children ; I speak of that love which the Scripture indicates, when it declares that “ God esteems us dear as the apple of his eye ;” that “ we are more precious than jewels ;” that “ we are as a crown of glory and a royal diadem in his hand ;” that

“we are set as a seal upon his heart, as a seal upon his arm;” that *“we may dwell in him, and he in us.”**

Such a love is an essential and inseparable consequence of a state of regeneration and grace; and consequently, every man who knows with certainty that he is in this state, knows with equal certainty that he is the object of this love. But is it possible to imagine a more just subject of joy? This is what two considerations will clearly show, first, that nothing is more useful than this love: there is no advantage, no blessing which would not be its infallible consequence. What, in fact, could be wanting to those whom the Governor of the universe, this God so powerful, this God so munificent and so liberal, honors with all his love? What can he refuse them? and what desires can he leave them ungratified? A subject congratulates himself that his prince honors him with his good-will, and nothing appears to him equal to this advantage. But what is the good-will of a mortal prince in comparison with the love of God? with that love, far more constant, far more beneficent, far more honorable than that of men?

The other consideration which places this truth

* Zech. ii. 8. Isa. lxi. 10; lxii. 3. Cant. viii. 6.

in its proper light is, that the believer, knowing that God loves him, knows that he is loved of him whom he most loves. Nothing is more essential to a child of God than to love God supremely, and above all things. This is what I have elsewhere sufficiently proved. Thus the Christian of whom I speak, loving God in this manner, and knowing with certainty that he is tenderly beloved, cannot but have a joy very lively and very pure; for finally, it may be easily conceived that nothing is more sweet than to know that our love is returned by those we love. It is also certain that the Scriptures make joy the consequence of sanctification and of piety. They say the soul of the righteous is in a continual feast: they say the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace and joy in the HOLY GHOST: they say that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace and long-suffering: they assure us that this joy is glorious and unspeakable. But as the believer is not ignorant that these advantages, the possession of which conveys to him such sweet transports, are neither his own work nor the reward of his actions, but the effects of the goodness and liberality of his God, his joy is accompanied with a lively and deep gratitude to that God to whom he knows he is solely obliged.

To excite more and more this sentiment, it concerns us to pay attention to three things.

The first is, the greatness and excellence of those advantages we possess, and which we have received from the hand of God. What I have already said upon the subject of joy suffices to show what we should think in respect to gratitude, and it is not necessary here to enlarge upon this. The second is the extreme unworthiness which has preceded the reception of these blessings. Far from meriting them, far from having done any thing which invited God to grant them, we have committed the most inexcusable faults; we have tempted his wrath by innumerable provocations. "*When we were without strength,*" says St. Paul,* "*CHRIST died for the ungodly;*" and "*GOD commendeth his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners CHRIST died for us.*" Finally, the last is the almost infinite number of those to whom God has not shown this same grace; having abandoned them to the darkness of their mind, and to the hardness of their heart, though they were not more unworthy than ourselves of the favors he has granted us.

If we duly consider all these things, we shall find ourselves penetrated with gratitude for the

* Rom. v. 6, 7.

goodness of God, to which we owe such infinite obligation. We shall love him more powerfully than we have yet loved him, though we may have already loved him supremely, and above every thing. We shall be ready to give him proofs the most sincere and unqualified of this love, and to wheresoever he may call us we shall follow his command with pleasure, and without reluctance. We shall especially find no difficulty in offering him our thanks, which we may do in the following manner.

PRAYER.

LORD my God, I cast myself humbly and lowly at thy feet, to thank thee with my whole heart for all the favors I have received at thy hand from my first days until now. These favors, LORD, are very great in number, and moreover there is not one of them that is not infinitely precious. But that which chiefly fills me with admiration, and which inspires me with the most lively gratitude for thy goodness, which is its source, is that which thou hast accomplished for me in subduing the obstinacy of my heart; in plucking me by thy grace from that abyss of darkness, of corruption and of misery into which I had plunged myself by my crimes; in enlight-

ening me with the light of thy knowledge; and in uniting me by faith to thy holy Son JESUS, that I may find in him light, life and salvation.

What have I done, O blessed God, to invite thee to deal with me after this manner? By which of my actions; by which of my words; by which of my thoughts have I deserved such a display of thy power and of thy goodness? Or to speak more correctly, what have I not done to prejudice thee against me; and to arrest thy liberality even in its source? Notwithstanding my unworthiness, Father of mercy, notwithstanding the blindness of my mind and the hardness of my heart, thou hast shed upon me thy benefits; thou hast granted me those which are very precious. Can I doubt, then, but that it is my duty to preserve for thee an unceasing gratitude? Yet this is not the only motive that engages me thereto: I find another very considerable cause of gratitude in the reflection, that although I have responded very badly to the first effects of thy grace and thy benefits, having only had the tendency to draw me to new outrages against thee, thou hast not suspended the course of thy liberality; thou hast not ceased to shed upon me new graces, and to give me new favors. Whatever efforts I have made to escape thee, thou hast always restrained me. Though I have so often grieved thy Holy Spirit, which has

sealed me unto the day of redemption, thou hast not wholly withdrawn him from my soul. Thou hast continued to me his most precious gifts, so that however unworthy I may be of them, I can perceive him still living and acting in my soul, and bearing witness with my spirit that I belong to the number of thy children. What gratitude is not due unto thee, O my God, for so many benefits; and what couldst thou require of me which I could be justified in refusing? Nevertheless, what can I do that I may correspond to it? Little, indeed, O my God! I can love thee, worship thee, bless thee, praise thee, and thank thee. This I do, Father of mercies! But as this is done neither as ardently nor as perfectly as I would, I have recourse to thee, and with my whole heart I pray that it may please thee to give me whatever is deficient, and to produce it in my soul by the powerful efficacy of thy Holy Spirit. Inspire me, LORD, with all the zeal and all the gratitude which is so justly due to thee, and grant that seeing the infinite obligations I am under to thy goodness, I may consecrate myself unreservedly to thy sacred service, and may desire nothing with so much ardor as to conform myself in all things to thy will. In a word, LORD, I beseech thee favorably to accept these feeble efforts of my zeal, and to supply its defects both by producing

it in me by thy grace, and by covering its deficiency by the perfect satisfaction of thy Son, in whose name I ask this grace, and all others which can be necessary to me.

CHAPTER IV.

SECOND ORDER OF DUTIES FOR THE BELIEVER PERSUADED OF
HIS PEACE AND RECONCILIATION WITH GOD.

THE thoughts which have occupied the preceding chapter, grow out of a consideration of the past and of the present. The future excites others which are not less necessary; the principal of which is, the hope of a blessed immortality, which we consider as a blessing we ought infallibly to possess. We find ourselves at the point of quitting the world: we have arrived at the last moments which we are to pass therein; we see the eternity which is immediately to follow this end of our time, and we are assured that all this eternity is about to be an eternity of bliss, of satisfaction, and of joy. This hope is founded upon the persuasion of two truths, neither of which is to be doubted.

The one is, that all those whom God has adopted, justified and renewed by his grace, and who persevere in the happy state in which these several benefits have placed them, quit the earth only that they may enter upon the possession of heaven. The other is, that we are doubtless in

this state, that we have truly received these graces, and that we have not fallen from them by any of those great sins which suspend the effects of them.

That we may not doubt the first of these truths, it is sufficient to have some knowledge of the Gospel, there being nothing which this Gospel more formally attests than this:—it teaches us, that “*Whosoever heareth the words of JESUS CHRIST, and believes on him who sent him, hath eternal life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death to life.*” It teaches us, that all they who persevere unto the end shall be saved: that they whom God foreknew, he also did predestinate; and whom he did predestinate them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified. It teaches us, that “*If the earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building of GOD, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*” It teaches us, that “*blessed are the dead which die in the LORD, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them.*”

The second truth is not quite as certain as the preceding; nevertheless, if we have examined ourselves with care, and if we have taken all the needful precautions to avoid mistake in this

examination, we have no reason to doubt it. Hence St. Paul scruples not to say that it is the Spirit himself who bears witness of this truth; "*The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.*"* These truths established, we cannot doubt that we shall possess immediately after death the felicity and glory of the life to come. Behold then, a new subject of satisfaction and of joy, distinct from that of which I spoke in the preceding chapter. The believer who knows the state into which divine mercy has brought him, is not only sensible that he possesses great advantages, he moreover knows that there are others greater and more precious which await him, and which he shall possess in a few moments; he knows that GOD is about to receive him into his heaven, the sanctuary of his immortality and of his glory; he knows that JESUS CHRIST is about to adorn him with a crown, the brilliancy of which shall not be diminished through all the ages of eternity; he knows he shall be placed upon a throne which shall never be shaken; he knows, in one word, that all that can be imagined of glory, of pleasure, of felicity, shall be granted him.

Can it be possible that the certain expectation of a blessedness so great, and at the same time,

* Rom. viii. 16.

so near, should not fill him with satisfaction and joy? But this is not all. Can it be possible that this object should not excite his desires, and should not inspire him with a holy and commendable impatience to find himself very soon in possession of such great advantages? Nothing is more natural than the desire to be happy: to this we are led by the most powerful attraction, and by an effect of the natural constitution of our heart. This blessedness offers itself in this moment to the faith and hope of the child of God. He sees it, he expects it, and can he see it, and expect it, without also desiring it; and can he desire it only feebly or faintly?

It is of no importance that he cannot take possession of this blessedness, but by suffering death. What can death have in it so terrible that cannot be dispelled by the consideration of what shall follow? Death in itself is only a very small thing; separate it from its consequences, consider it in itself, and without uniting to it any other idea, I maintain that it is an inconsiderable evil, and may not be compared with a great number of other evils which we suffer in life with a sufficiently moderate fortitude. That which renders it so terrible is what follows; it is the judgment to which it leads all men; it is the hell, and condemnation into which so many are the moment

ensuing, so suddenly precipitated. This it is which reasonably occasions our fear. But as the child of God, of whom I speak, fears neither this judgment nor this hell; as he knows that this judgment will be for him a judgment of absolution and of grace; as he knows that instead of being plunged into hell he shall be transported to paradise; as, in a word, he is persuaded that all which shall follow his death shall be advantageous to him, as he finally knows these advantages bear no proportion with that which death, whatever it may be, can have in it that is grievous, he desires it more than he apprehends it, and says with the Apostle, "*Having a desire to depart and be with CHRIST, which is far better.*" Such, in brief, are the thoughts which occupy the mind on these occasions.

MEDITATION.

Either appearances deceive me, or I am soon to depart from this earthly tabernacle and appear before the judgment-seat of my God, to render him an account of my life past, and hear from his own lips the sentence which is to decide my state for all eternity. What shall be the nature of this sentence? Shall it be a sentence of con-

demnation and of death? Shall it be a judgment of absolution and of grace? If the Judge who is to pronounce it should have no other rule to follow than his justice, there is no doubt but he must condemn me. For how many are the sins I have committed since my birth, which deserve severe punishment, and from which it is impossible that I could cleanse myself! I can neither deny, nor excuse, nor extenuate them. Their number is prodigious. There are many whose malignity is extreme. This being certain, how can I appear before the bar of his justice without hearing my condemnation? But on the other hand, how can I doubt the goodness, the clemency and the mercy of my Judge? Do I not know that this Judge is my intercessor and my advocate? Hath he not blotted out, by the shedding of his precious blood, all those sins with which I am chargeable? Hath he not fully and perfectly satisfied the justice of his Father for all those injuries I committed? Which of all my sins has he not expiated? Which has he not abolished by the sacrifice of his bitter passion and precious death? It is true, that to succeed, by the salutary power of this sacrifice and by the efficacy of this blood, I must have not only faith and repentance, but a lively faith working by love, a sincere repentance, and attended by a true

amendment, without which, neither the mercy of God, nor the death of his Son, nor all the value of his sacrifice can save me from perishing. But it is also true, that although of myself I am absolutely incapable to exercise such a repentance, and such a faith, the almighty grace and free compassion of my Redeemer, the supernatural efficacy of his Holy Spirit, have mercifully produced them in my soul: I perceive them, I feel them, and with my whole heart I praise the Father of lights, the author and giver of every good and perfect gift, that, notwithstanding my great unworthiness, he hath been pleased to grant me so precious a favor. It is, moreover, true, that this faith and this repentance which I realize, have great defects which I cannot dissemble. It is true, that the renewal of my heart is still very imperfect, and attended with many failings which are grievous unto me, and cover me with confusion. But all feeble and imperfect as it is, yet is it sincere and true. It is the production, not of my miserable nature, but of the sanctifying and renewing grace of the Spirit from on high. Of this I can have no doubt, and I have evidences which entirely convince me of it. With such a conviction, may I not persuade myself, that those imperfections with which I reproach myself, will not hinder my Judge from pronouncing my abso-

lution, and hinder him not even at this moment from regarding me as one of the living members of his mystical body, as one of those dear sheep which he hath bought with his death, and for whom he shed his blood, and whom he hath said, that "*not one of them should perish,*" and that "*he will give them eternal life?*" However sinful and miserable I am in myself, however unable to stand a moment before his formidable bar of justice, I come to offer myself without any fear of condemnation before that of his mercy and goodness. I come to defend myself boldly and confidently against the accusations of the adversary, who will produce against me all the sins I have committed in my whole life. I shall shut his mouth, not by denying or extenuating these sins, (God forbid!) but by maintaining, as I can, by an admirable effect of the goodness of my God, that these sins have all been blotted out by the blood of my Redeemer; that I have obtained the remission of them, and that this grace has been sealed and manifested to my conscience. I am confident that my accuser will be confounded. I am confident I shall hear this favorable announcement from the very lips of my Judge himself, "*Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee.*" "*Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*"

“Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world.” What then will be my joy, and what my bliss! I shall be received into that divine and celestial Jerusalem, whose streets are paved with the purest gold, and whose foundations are of precious stones! I shall be introduced into the temple and palace of my God, and shall sit with my Redeemer upon his throne, and be made partaker of his glory! I shall never be separated from him, and not one moment shall I be deprived of his presence; but in the quire of angels, associated with the spirits of the just made perfect, I shall enjoy with them a felicity which shall never end, and which shall leave me not one desire ungratified.

What would be my blindness if death, which would conduct me to the possession of such a glory, should be able to give me the least pain. It is true that it is destined to terminate this mortal life which I drag out here on earth; but far from this inspiring me with fear of death, it should lead me to desire it. This life, which I am about to lose, has two things in it which should silence such a regret: it is chequered with innumerable woes, and it is only a tissue of crimes. Can the pleasures I have tasted enter into comparison with the sorrows which have so often overwhelmed my

soul? Can I not say with as much reason as the Patriarch, "*Few and evil have been the days of the years of my pilgrimage?*" My maladies, my sorrows, my embarrassments, my disgraces, the adverse state of my affairs, my losses, my unsuccessful enterprises, the persecutions of my enemies, the unfaithfulness and negligence of my friends, a thousand grievous accidents, for which I have none to accuse; all this, I say, has it not followed in such quick succession that I can scarcely find a day in all the course of my life when some one of these various subjects of disappointment has not penetrated and rent my heart?

On the other hand, has there been one of these days in which I have not offended my God and inflicted some wound upon my conscience? There is not one of these days that God has not marked with some one of his favors; but there is not one also which I have not dishonored by some one of my ungrateful acts. Can I, notwithstanding, promise myself that whenever it should please God to lengthen my life, that portion he should add would be neither more happy nor more innocent than what has been passed? shall I not be always exposed to the same dangers, and shall I not have occasion to apprehend either the same displeasure and the same sins, or similar displea-

sure and similar sins? Does such a life deserve neither regret nor that we should wish for its continuation? Should I, consequently, alarm myself in view of its approaching end, — above all, when I compare it with that which I ought to have led? Instead of this life, so sad, so crossed, so stained with crime, I am to possess one extremely happy, pure and holy, exempt from all kinds of sin, distinguished by a perfect holiness and a perfect joy. How happy an exchange! and where would be my judgment if I saw in it any subject of terror? It is true that death is about to take from me what I possess upon the earth, what remains to me by inheritance from my ancestors, and what I may have added by my own industry. But first, how small is the portion which will descend to me, either considered in itself, or in comparison with that of many others! Besides all that the most wealthy and the most powerful can have, what is it in comparison with that which God reserves in his paradise for the least of all his saints?

In this respect, then, I shall lose nothing; on the contrary, I shall profit greatly, and that which I shall lose is nothing in comparison of that which the liberality of my God prepares for me. It is, moreover, true, that this body, which I have loved alas, too much, is about being deprived of life;

is about being mingled with the earth, and to be reduced to a state of which I cannot think without shuddering. But first, what concern is it to me that my body perishes if my soul is saved? Is it not my soul which constitutes the principal part of the little which I am? and will not this soul be happy while the body is decomposed in the tomb? Besides, if this body is no longer in a state to taste or to confer pleasure, it must also be exempt from pain; and as during life it is rent asunder by more griefs than it is allowed pleasures to enjoy, it is evident, that rightly to appreciate the state into which death advances us, it is more desirable than that from which it takes us.

Finally, this vile body shall not always remain in the sad estate to which it is about being reduced; the day is coming when it shall be made like to the glorious body of my Redeemer; this great Saviour shall awaken it from the tomb; shall crown it with his glory, and shall place it in a state to shine eternally in heaven. I admit, moreover, that it is very possible I may suffer some pain and some uneasiness, both at and before my decease. But besides that the reverse of this may happen; besides that I may not be conscious of all that takes place in my body, though I should suffer several days, what would this be in comparison of the joy and bliss to which these short

and transient sufferings would infallibly conduct me? There is but one consideration which can make me wish to live: this is, the hope of being able to labor more effectually than I have in the service of my God; to assist and edify my neighbors; to correct my faults, and advance the work of my sanctification and salvation. But besides that this hope is not very certain, and that perhaps instead of serving God, I might offend him; instead of advancing in the way of heaven I might fall back; besides this, I say, should it not be sufficient for me to know that God, who is incomparably wiser than I, wishes I should die, to persuade me on the one hand that death would be to me more advantageous than life; and on the other, that it is by my death, not by my life, that God would be glorified? I hearken, then, to nothing, O my God. Whatever flesh and blood may do to retain me on the earth, I depart from it without regret and without reluctance. Thou dost call me to thyself, not to destroy me, but to save me; not to make me suffer the punishments I have merited, but to crown me with the glory which thy dear Son hath acquired for me at the price of his blood. I obey with joy the voice of thy command. "*Into thy hands I commit my spirit;*" thou hast created, thou hast redeemed, thou hast sanctified it: it is, therefore, much

rather thine than mine ; I resign it unreservedly to thee, merciful Father ; I consent that it should be thine ; or to speak more properly, I pray thee with all the ardor I can feel, that it would please thee to receive it, and in such wise to possess thyself of it, that neither the efforts of my spiritual enemies, nor its own remissness, nor its own inconstancy, shall be ever able to separate it from thee. Thou hast inspired me with thy fear and love, O my God ; give me to persevere in it to the last moment of my life ; give me even to advance in it ; and grant that during the few moments which yet remain for me to pass upon this earth, I may gain continually new advantages over these unhappy remains of corruption which thy grace has not yet extinguished in my heart. Grant that the effort by which I endeavor to unite myself to thee may resemble that motion in nature which increases its rapidity in proportion as it approaches its centre ! Give me for this effect new helps of thy grace : shed upon my mind new lights : excite new transports in my heart, and grant that as "*the outward man decayeth, the inward man*" may be "*renewed day by day.*"

CHAPTER V.

THIRD ORDER OF THE SAME DUTIES.

I HAVE suggested in the two preceding chapters an idea which merits further consideration. It is, that the believer, who, on examining himself with care, has found in the course of his actions, and in the present state of his soul, the certain evidences of his adoption, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in his heart, has also there remarked various infirmities and various imperfections which greatly grieve him. In fact, the most renewed Christians are not exempt from these, and it would be a bad sign if they perceived them not. It would be an incontestible proof of a pride carried to its utmost excess, and consequently an indication, not of a perfect or imperfect renewal of the mind, but of a total subjection to sin. I am therefore persuaded, that every true believer is conscious to himself of these imperfections. There are, indeed, many that he remarks. — There are two degrees of them; there are actual sins, and habitual and permanent dispositions. In respect to the actual sins, St. James has informed us that “*In many things we offend*

all." And St. John assures us that "*If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us; we make God a liar, and have not his word abiding in us.*"

I am well aware that there are believers who pass a considerable space of time without falling into any of those gross and notorious sins of which St. Paul tells us that "*they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God:*" such are murder, adultery, lewdness, lying, drunkenness, injustice, and other sins of this sort. But besides that all cannot boast of the same thing, there are other sins less atrocious and less flagrant against the truth, but which are, notwithstanding, too considerable in themselves, yet from which the most experienced of God's children are not exempt. Such are many sins of thought, various sudden motions of concupiscence, useless discourse, severe satire, bitter words, distractions in prayer, emotions of reluctance and of vanity which the flesh excites when we have done a good and rather difficult work, together with other similar sins. We are to add various sins of ignorance, which we would have avoided if we had known them, and which we would have known if we had used the proper care to be informed of them. Above all, we are to add many sins of omission: it is for these that the

believer finds the greatest occasion of self-reproach. In fact, these sins consist in not doing all that we could and ought to do, both to promote the glory of God and the good of our neighbor, as well as to labor for our own salvation.

Since, then, there is not, perhaps, a moment when we could not and ought not to do something in one or the other of these three designs, and yet very few in which we do them, it is evident that there are very few in which we do not sin in this manner. To all these actual sins we must add habitual imperfections, of which the most holy have occasion to reproach themselves,—weakness of faith, declension in zeal and charity, various attachments for the creature of which we cannot entirely and perfectly divest ourselves:—all this combined occasions great subject for grief and affliction, and from which none are wholly exempt. For in the first place, although even each of these failings taken by itself appears not very considerable, yet all together could not fail to be much, because, in fact, they are in great number, and a great number of small things constitute a mass which cannot be inconsiderable. Besides, these failings, however small in one sense, and when we compare them with others which are more atrocious, are nevertheless sufficiently great in themselves, especially when we

consider them in respect to God, whom it is so just to serve with more care and precaution; and still further when we come to pay attention to the motives which should lead us to shun the most trifling faults. In fact, what can be pardoned in persons purchased wholly by the blood of JESUS CHRIST, and destined to the possession of all the heavenly glory? Would the purity of angels be too great for those who are actuated by such considerations? But what should make the principal impression on the soul of the believer on these occasions, is the facility with which he would have been able to avoid at least the greater part of these failings, if he had been willing to apply himself to it as he ought to have done. I allow, in fact, that he might not know how to shun them all, at least with the ordinary aids of grace. But besides that he might obtain these almost to an infinite degree by asking for them as he ought, it is certain that vigilance and application could have subdued innumerable faults, into which he might have fallen through negligence. Thus, whatever ground he may take, he will find just occasion of reproach for this description of failings; and doubtless the believer becomes very sensible of this when he sees the approach of death, and seriously reflecting upon his life past, and upon the present state of his

heart, he remarks therein all these humiliating proofs of his negligence. This is what also excites his repentance, and which leads him to implore the mercy of God with ardor, acknowledging that this mercy must be infinite not to punish him for all those various failings into which he has fallen, and which doubtless would have merited all the punishment of hell if God should deal with him according to the rules of an exact and rigorous justice. This is what also inspires him with humility. In fact, nothing better convinces him of his worthlessness, and of all the reasons he has to despise himself, than to see, that with all the inward and outward aids, natural and supernatural, which the mercy of God has given him, he has not known how to correct himself of this great number of faults with which he is chargeable, and which appear to him now far more insupportable than they did during life. He sees what they are, and he knows besides, that there is this disparity between these faults and the little good he remarks in himself: that all this good is derived from another source, being not his own production, but the work of a grace which he has by no means merited. Hence he doubly imputes to himself his faults, because on the one hand he has contracted them by bad conduct, and on the other, he has neglected to

correct them as he ought. He requires nothing more to confound him, and to convince him that having no reason for self-applause and self-exaltation, he has more for self-abasement and self-accusation, both before God and before men. Finally, this view leads him to make a last effort to tear from his heart all those degrading remains of his natural corruption, by wholly renouncing the creature, which at the same time equally begins to abandon him and disappear, and giving himself wholly to God, who is both sufficiently great to fill his heart, and sufficiently good not to refuse to take possession of it. Such reflections should lead him to make this prayer.

PRAYER.

O LORD my God, I cast myself at thy footstool to supplicate with my whole heart that it would please thee not to impute to me the fearful negligence with which I have labored during all the course of my life in the work of my salvation: this was the principal use which I should have made of this life: it was for this that thou hast given it me, and nothing concerned me as this alone. Nevertheless, how have I applied myself to it? This but too clearly is seen by the result. I find myself full of faults and imperfections,

which I acknowledge I cannot excuse. They are in every sense and respect insupportable. They are directly opposed to the purity which thou dost require of us, and which ought to be found in all thy children. I have not wanted means to deliver myself from them: thou hast given me powerful helps to labor for it. Thou hast been always ready to grant me still more, and I would have doubtless received them, if I had known, or more properly speaking, if I had been inclined to have asked them as I ought. Instead of pursuing this course, I have given all my cares and all my application to other objects. The world, its vain interests, its amusements, its pleasures, have miserably consumed my whole life; so that, after so long a time which thou hast had the goodness to give me to work out my salvation, this great concern has progressed but little, and I have hardly commenced what I should have completed. I freely confess to thee, O my God, that this conduct is intolerable; and if thou shouldst punish me for it with banishment from heaven, and casting me into hell, I acknowledge that I could have no ground of complaint. I have but too well deserved it, O my God. But since this negligence is comprehended in the number of the sins which thy holy Son hath expiated by his death, and for which he hath satisfied thy justice;

and besides that I condemn and detest it with all my heart, that I have a lively and sincere grief for it, wilt thou not pardon it, merciful Father, and instead of imputing it to me as I deserve, wilt thou not impute to me the merit of thy holy Son? I doubt it not, O my God; I am very powerfully persuaded that thy mercy is immense and inexhaustible; I am persuaded that we ask it not in vain if only we implore it with faith and repentance. It is thus I have recourse to it, compassionate Redeemer of men. Reject me not, O thou who hast never rejected any: and as it is in thy power to destroy and abolish all these failings with which I reproach myself, and for which I cannot pardon myself, and to impart the perfections which are opposed to them, I beseech thee with my whole heart that thou wouldst at once work in me this miracle, and grant that my heart, which has been thus far so unjustly divided between thee and the world, may give itself entirely to thee, seek only thee, love only thee, who alone art worthy to be loved, and who alone canst constitute its felicity: this of all the graces, is the one which I especially need, and that which I ask with the most importunity, O my God; because, in fact, it is that which is most necessary to me. I have, besides, some ground to promise it to myself; it is the principal production of thy

Holy Spirit; of that spirit which thou dost never refuse to those who ask it of thee. Grant it me, O my God; grant that I may love thee with all my heart; and if not as much as thou art worthy to be loved, at least as much as I am capable to love thee. Excite in me a disgust toward every other thing. Inspire me with a holy contempt for the earth. Grant me to leave it without regret. Grant me to sigh for thee, and not to seek, except in thee, my bliss, my satisfaction and my joy.

CHAPTER VI.

WHAT THEY SHOULD DO WHO, AFTER CAREFUL SELF EXAMINATION, CANNOT ASSURE THEMSELVES OF THEIR TRUE STATE, AND DOUBT WHETHER THEY HAVE BECOME RECONCILED WITH GOD.

THESE are some of the principal duties of believers firmly and strongly persuaded of their reconciliation with God. But all the dying have not this persuasion. There are those who are convinced to the contrary, and who doubt not but that they may be always in a state of sin and of condemnation. There are others who know not what is their state, as well because they have never taken the pains to inquire, as because, having attended to it, they have found nothing which might determine their mind, and which might give them occasion to assure themselves whether they were children of God, or whether they were not so.

These last are doubtless much to be deplored; nothing is more sad than their condition. These belong not to the ungodly, who take no interest in their salvation; they desire to be saved, and dread to be lost. I may even be allowed to

suppose that they have some love for God, since if they loved him not at all they would find it difficult to doubt what was their condition. They would pronounce without hesitation, that it is deplorable. Yet they doubt. They know not whether they are the objects of the hatred or of the love of God, and whether they may expect the punishments of hell, or the bliss of heaven, to which he reserves them. They know that their destiny is to be soon decided, but they know not in what manner this shall be. This uncertainty is very troublesome during life, and it is surprising that they who realize it take not the requisite pains to deliver themselves from it. Nevertheless, two things occasion it to be by no means as intolerable as it ought to be: one, that we are distracted and occupied by other thoughts, which occasion this not to enter deeply in the mind; the other, that we flatter ourselves with the hope, that some day we will take other cares and other measures to enlighten ourselves upon this important subject. All this leads us to trouble ourselves but little for this uncertainty, although in fact the method should be such that we would never permit ourselves to lose a moment to extricate ourselves from it.

But it is not thus at the approach of death. We think of it then spite of all our reluctances. The

danger which we run, and the inability we realize to fly and avoid it, powerfully impress the mind, and excite in the soul all that it can feel of fear, of terror and of uneasiness. There wants but little, indeed, to prevent it from falling absolutely into despair. These disquietudes arise not only from the consideration of the danger to which we find ourselves exposed; they spring besides from self-reproach for not taking early all the necessary precautions to avoid falling into such a perplexity. We see the injury we have done in allowing a whole life to pass without performing that single thing to which it ought to have been devoted. We comprehend all the extravagance of this conduct; and this it is which occasions that we cannot pardon it.

These self-reproaches are surely very just; but we must not, nevertheless, abandon ourselves to them. We must employ all our remaining time not in lamenting our misfortune, but in an endeavor to repair it. This is what might appear difficult, but it is not impossible. There are two courses which we may take to deliver ourselves from this embarrassment. The first is to examine ourselves entirely anew, and to weigh more exactly than we have done, the reasons which we had both to fear and to hope. For finally, the question which we must decide is not so obscure

as that it should be impossible to know with certainty on which side the truth rests, provided we receive it as we ought, and that we observe the precautions which it is never permitted to neglect upon any subject. But as all are not in a state to take these precautions, and as, besides, the subject is of pressing concern, it is better to observe the rule which good sense suggests on these occasions. It is, to adopt always that (measure) which is most sure, and consequently, to do all that we should if we doubted not we were in a state of sin and of condemnation. It is to endeavor to obtain reconciliation with God, and for this to omit none of those acts of faith, of contrition and of repentance which are necessary to obtain the favor of God during this life, and his glory in the life to come. In fact, admit that we have done this without knowing it: admit that we have obtained the mercy of God, the remission of all the sins we have committed: what do we hazard by once more imploring it, and in laboring to excite in ourselves the dispositions which are necessary to obtain it? Can those who even doubt not their justification, fail in performing these acts? and ought they to fail, not merely to do them, but renew them as often as possible? Let us suppose, on the contrary, that he who doubts his reconciliation with God should be, in

fact, an object of his wrath and vengeance, as it is possible he might be, — is he not lost if he uses no endeavors to become reconciled to him, and if he does not all with this desire that might afford him the means of success? Thus these cares possibly being necessary, and never possible to do any injury, good sense allows not that they should be neglected.

Both they, then, who doubt their reconciliation with God, and they who are convinced that they no longer possess this great advantage, have the same cares to take, and the same precautions to observe. Thus it is by no means necessary to make of this two distinct cases; one will suffice; and all who find themselves in either of these two states can take to himself what I am about to say

CHAPTER VII.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE BY HIM WHO SUPPOSES EITHER THAT HE IS, OR MAY BE IN A STATE OF SIN AND OF CONDEMNATION—HE SHOULD FIRST BE PERSUADED OF THE TRUTHS WHICH RELIGION TEACHES.

THE first thing to which a man who supposes that he is, or that he possibly may be in a state of sin and condemnation should apply himself, is, to endeavor to be reconciled with God, and to obtain of his grace the inestimable benefit of justification which is inseparable from all the others.

To succeed in this design, many things are necessary to him. One of the most indispensable of these is, in my idea, a very strong persuasion of revealed truth. I speak not now of that act of our faith which attaches us wholly to JESUS CHRIST crucified, and which applies his merit in an effectual and salutary manner; that will be noticed in its place. There are other acts which ought to precede this, and which it is well to consider, each in its order. The first is this general persuasion of which I have spoken. It is absolutely necessary: for what, finally, can be

expected of a man who believes in none of the truths which the Son of God has come to reveal to the world, and which are the foundations of religion; for instance, the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, judgment, hell, paradise, the redemption of the world, and the remaining principal doctrines which the word of God exhibits to us? What can we even expect of those who, though they do not positively reject these great and important truths, believe in them only feebly and lightly, scarcely knowing at all what they should think, and receiving them only with much doubt and uncertainty?

The emotions of piety cannot be formed in the soul but by the persuasion which faith affords us of their necessity and of their justice, and by the force of other motives which revelation proposes to us for their excitement. If this faith is weak, if we doubt the truth of this revelation, how would it be possible that these emotions could be what they ought to be? The heart acts only as it is led by the understanding: if the light of the understanding is feeble, the emotions of the heart are faint. Neither the light of sense nor that of reason can create the emotions necessary on these occasions; it is only that of faith which produces this effect. If this faith is mingled with doubt and uncertainty, it can have no effect to move the

heart, nor to draw it, with however small a degree of attraction, toward the service of God. There is, then, very little hope for those who have passed their life without taking the pains which are absolutely necessary to root out unbelief from their heart. Let us suppose, nevertheless, that it has not been done. Admit that these doubts still exist when we perceive that death approaches; that we have too long postponed this duty, and that there is something extremely criminal, and entirely indefensible in such a course; I cannot believe that we should abandon the attempt to correct it, nor fall into despair. We should at least improve the few moments which we have before us, and employ them in creating this persuasion, without which all the care we can bestow on our salvation would be in vain. To this end, we must recal to mind the reasons which lead us to believe, and which it is impossible but we must have frequently heard in the course of our life; because, in fact, we often propose them to ourselves: above all, at a time when unbelief is as common as it is, and becomes so every day. It is not impossible that these reasons might make at this moment an impression more deep than during life. Grace never wants the power to perform the greatest miracles; and moreover, the near view of death is a powerful antidote to the

licentiousness of the mind. Whence comes this licentiousness? Is it from the weakness of the motives which lead to belief? By no means: they are more than sufficient to create a substantial persuasion, provided only they are ascertained. Is it then the dulness of the mind which hinders it from understanding and ascertaining these motives? Not at all: here is not, at least, the most ordinary cause. It is the corruption of the heart; it is the sad attachment which it has for the world and its false advantages. We doubt because it is easy to doubt. We desire neither to relinquish those pleasures, nor to be troubled with the remorse which condemns them. We desire to sin, and to sin without uneasiness. It is with such a design that we study the reasons which create our doubts, and that we take the same pains not to believe that we should take to suppress unbelief. This is what makes unbelievers during life; but it is what should not have the same effect at death. We find ourselves forsaken of the world, of its advantages, and of its pleasures. Thus nothing prevents us from opening our eyes, or that we should cease to rebel against the light, as speaks the Holy Scriptures,* and to resist the force of truth. This, however, fre-

* Job xxiv. 13.

quently happens, as I have elsewhere observed. But if we are not absolutely unbelieving on such occasions, it too often occurs that we are not persuaded with sufficient conviction and power that it would be desirable.

To speak properly and with precision, we may be said not to doubt, and the mind is not in suspense between the reception of the truths of salvation and their rejection. It embraces them, it believes them, but it has not a conviction as strong as that required by the certainty and power of those motives which should lead them to believe. This is the most ordinary state, not only of sinners, but even of the children of God; yet with this difference; that this persuasion is incomparably more lively and powerful in the one than in the others.

All should then seek to be delivered from these sad remains of unbelief; all should strive to settle themselves upon the unchangeable truth of God's word, so certain, as revealed in Holy Scripture. Above all, we should implore the help of God, and say to him with the Apostles, "*LORD, increase our faith;*" and with the father of the lunatic, "*LORD, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.*"

PRAYER.

My LORD and my God! the sense of my infirmities and imperfections alarms me. I see a great number, both in my heart and in my mind. They are all shameful and criminal. They produce a thousand baneful effects, and interpose fearful obstacles to my salvation. But, LORD, that which most alarms me is the imperfection of my faith. Whatever efforts I make, I cannot entirely subject either my mind or my heart to the supreme authority of thy word. I cannot persuade myself as powerfully and as absolutely as I would, and as I ought, of the eternal truths which it has pleased thee to reveal to me. I am filled with grief and confusion on account of it, O my God. This grief itself, and this confusion, would overwhelm and cast me into despair, if I did not know on one hand, that thy mercy is infinite and inexhaustible; and on the other, that nothing is impossible to thee, and that thou doest always all that it pleaseth thee. This miserable mind, this depraved heart, of which I cannot relieve myself, are in thy hands. Thou canst not only bend them and turn them as thou wilt, but change them, reform them, renew them, and make them what they ought to be. Thou canst enlighten and rectify this mind; thou canst sanctify

this heart: from a heart of stone, such as it is naturally, thou canst make it a heart of flesh. Thy grace wants not the power to work this miracle. Refuse me not this, O my God: lead, lead my captive thoughts to thine obedience: persuade me powerfully of thy truth: triumph over all the resistance of my rebellious heart: dissipate the darkness of my mind. O thou who didst command at the beginning that the light should shine out of the darkness, shine thyself in my heart, to "*give me the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of JESUS CHRIST.*" Thou who hast so often given sight to the blind, enlighten now my mind with a knowledge of thy truth, and grant that this truth may in such a manner govern my mind, that it may be the only rule of my conduct, and the prevailing motive of my actions.

CHAPTER VIII.

TWO TRUTHS IN PARTICULAR WHICH SHOULD NOT BE DOUBTED
BY THE SINNER WHO LABORS UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF AN
EVIL CONSCIENCE.

WHAT has been considered in the preceding chapter is doubtless necessary, but it is certain also that it is not sufficient. It is not sufficient to have a vague and general persuasion of revealed truth; we must make to ourselves a particular application of it, and consider with attention the part we may have in it. If we do this, we shall not doubt concerning two things which are of the last importance. The first is, that we are lost without recovery if we are not converted; the second, that being converted, we may hope to be received into favor.

We know that we are sinners. Do we, in fact, need any other testimony than that of our own conscience, to convince us of it? We know that the sins with which we reproach ourselves, merit hell. This, even conscience, enlightened by the truths of revelation, permits us not to doubt. We know that God grants not his grace to the impenitent, to the obstinate, to unbelievers, who live

and die in sin. This is a truth which Scripture frequently asserts. We know that conversion, faith and repentance are the only means which place us under shelter from those eternal calamities which we deserve. May we not conclude that we are lost without remedy if we are not truly and sincerely converted, if we repent not of our sins, if we believe not in JESUS CHRIST, and if we embrace not his Gospel. There is here also a truth which cannot be doubted by those who have this general persuasion of the revealed verities of which I have spoken in the preceding chapter. It is not so with the second, which must be necessarily added thereunto. This is, that the means which I have pointed out are not only necessary, they are also certain and infallible; and that as none shall ever be saved who puts them not into practice, not one also of those who employ them shall perish. This truth, though unquestionable in my opinion, has not failed being contested. Some maintain that this rule has its exceptions. They say, that truly all those who are sincerely converted during their health, and who justify the sincerity of their conversion by a long succession of good works, and by a constant course of sanctification and of piety, are infallibly saved. They add, that it is not impossible that the same thing may happen to those who are

only converted at their death, as it appears by the example of the thief, who implored not the grace of JESUS CHRIST until the last moments of his life; but they maintain that this is an extraordinary grace, and that no conclusion can be drawn from it. They say that God sometimes receives such repentance, but that sometimes also he rejects it, as it pleases him. Whence, they conclude, that they who, not having been converted during their life, and who delay to do it till the bed of death, should not, indeed, fall into despair, but also, may not assure themselves that their repentance, however lively and however sincere it may be, can be well received; that it is very possible God may reject it, and that this is what they have reason to fear. I am far from this opinion; I am persuaded that conversion is never useless, provided only that it is sincere. I admit that it is rare, that it is difficult to return sincerely to God upon the bed of death; but I am persuaded that if we do so, we then do so effectually, and that we obtain every thing from the mercy of God. What principally convinces me of this is the universality of the promises of grace which God makes to us in his Gospel:—
“Whosoever shall call upon the name of the LORD shall be saved: Verily I say unto you, he that heareth my words, and believeth on him that sent

me, shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life. Have I any pleasure in the death of the sinner? As I live, saith the LORD GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live."

How could these promises be found constantly and universally true, if it should happen that they who truly and sincerely turn and believe in JESUS CHRIST might, notwithstanding, perish? Above all, who will believe that if GOD had understood it in this manner, he would not have added somewhere this exception to the general declaration of his will? Who can doubt that he would not have explained himself, clearly and fully, upon this point? Yet this he has not done. All the promises which he makes us are general and universal. Thus, we are not allowed to make exceptions to them. If it were permitted to add this thereto, I should wish to know why it might not be allowed to add others like it? I should at least desire to know what certainty we have that this is the only one we should add to it? But as there is none, I should wish to be informed who can assure himself that he is not in the situation of one of these unknown exceptions, which would prevent him from being saved, whatever might be his repentance. It appears to me, indeed, that

the idea of the mercy of God which this doctrine gives to us is very different from that which the Scriptures give us occasion to form of it. According to this hypothesis, God will eternally condemn true believers, true penitents, whose faith, conversion and repentance are very sincere. But according to all Scripture, God is so far from acting in this manner, that far from condemning believers and penitents, he gives faith and repentance to the impenitent and unbelieving. He triumphs over the hardness of their heart. He is "*found even of those who sought him not.*" How after that could he hide himself to many of those who seek him? These persons would not allow us to maintain that there are any sinners absolutely unworthy of the grace of God, whom he abandons to the hardness of their heart, without giving them any help to extricate themselves from the unhappy state in which they are. And they have no difficulty to comprehend that God forsakes, and afterward eternally condemns some of those who call upon him with their whole heart, who believe in him, who repent, and who truly renounce their sins. Is not this what the Saviour of the world calls in his Gospel, to "*strain at a gnat and swallow a camel?*" It is certain that a man who is truly and sincerely converted loves God supremely, and above all things: nothing is

more essential to a true conversion than such a love. This being admitted, I ask if it is possible to conceive that a man who is converted at the approach of death might perish? Is it conceivable that God might supremely hate a man who supremely loves him? Could we imagine any thing whatever more incredible than all this? What! he who loved us at the time when we were his enemies in thoughts and evil works — shall he hate us at the time when we love him with so much endeavor; what becomes, with such a supposition, of those words which CHRIST speaks in his Gospel, “*He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him?*”*

It is certain, moreover, that true conversion is a work of grace. This is what the Scriptures expressly teach, and which they repeat in various places: but can we imagine that God works to destroy him in whom he thus works? Is it conceivable that he honors him with the most precious of his favors, with the sole design to render him eternally miserable? What could be more opposed than this supposition to what the Apostle St. Paul teaches, — “*Whom God called, them he also justified; and whom he justified,*

* John xiv. 20.

them he also glorified." How would this agree with what the royal Prophet assures us, that God "*forsakes not the work of his own hands;*" — or with what the Apostle says, that "*the gifts and calling of God are without repentance?*" Scripture calls conversion a regeneration. Thus, all they that are truly converted, become thereby also the children of God. What can there be, then, more closely allied than the character of a child of God, and that of an heir of his heaven, and of his immortality? Does not St. Paul reason from the one to the other, saying to the Romans, "*If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with CHRIST?*" What a consequence would this be if a man who dies a child of God could be banished for ever from heaven!

Finally, we cannot deny two truths, which are the necessary consequence of that I am here considering. The one, that a man who is truly and sincerely converted, is justified the very moment he is converted, and before conversion has produced in him scarcely any of those fruits which it would eventually bear. The second, that a justified man is infallibly saved. The first of these truths appears clearly by the parable of the publican. JESUS CHRIST says, that this man, having prayed in the temple, "*went down to his house justified.*" Justification is then granted the mo-

ment when he truly repents, and it is by no means suspended by an expectation of the consequences which repentance should have. David, moreover, confirms the same thing when he says to God, "*I said I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.*"* Is not this to say, that remission of sin followed immediately the making of the request? The second truth is not less certain than the first. A justified man has obtained of God the entire remission of his sins: he cannot, then, be punished. He can say with St Paul, "*Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is CHRIST that died.*" This appears to me conclusive, and I see not how it can be replied against. I am then well persuaded that every man who is truly converted is thereby introduced into a state of grace, and consequently becomes an object of the love of God, and obtains all the effects of it as well during the few moments which may remain for him to live, as after death. He dies "*in the LORD,*" and consequently a moment after he is happy. "*His works do follow him,*" for he has performed some; the acts of contrition, of adoration, of love, of reverence, of faith, the

* Ps. xxxii. 5.

prayers, the praises which are necessarily comprehended in conversion, being so many works which, because they are inward and invisible, are not the less excellent nor less agreeable to God. Let it not be said, then, that JESUS CHRIST assures us in the Gospel that "*many will desire to enter in but cannot:*" this by no means contradicts what I have here said: this will admit of a two-fold explanation, neither of which destroys what I have here advanced.

We may in the first place understand this of what will happen when after death we present ourselves before the judgment-seat of CHRIST. Then we might desire to enter in, but we shall not be able, because, in fact, we consider it too late. We are no longer in the way; we are at its termination. This is what JESUS CHRIST teaches us by the parable of the virgins; the bridegroom had already come when the foolish virgins desired to enter, and he refused to open to them.

We may, besides, understand this of what happens during life. Many would enter and cannot, because they desire it not with sufficient energy. In fact, to be converted it is not sufficient to desire it; we must desire it absolutely, with determination, constantly, effectually, and with a will followed by execution. They who desire it only

feebly and faintly, they who desire it without laboring with assiduity, they who make only transient and ineffectual resolutions, desire it without any success. This is all that JESUS CHRIST meant to say in this passage: but what he says, does not intimate that they who before death desire earnestly and sincerely to enter, will not be able. Let it not be objected that the same God who requires repentance requires also the fruits of it: this is what I have no disposition to deny. But I maintain two things which are incontestible. One, that the repentance of those concerning whom I speak is not absolutely without fruits: these fruits are good works, and I am about to show that they are such. The other, that God never imputes the omission of what he demands when it is absolutely involuntary: otherwise he would impute to those whose indigence is extreme, the impossibility which they experience to relieve the indigence of others. He would impute to the dumb the impossibility they find to confess the truth and to instruct the ignorant. The impossibility to bring forth the fruits of repentance, which is felt by those of whom I speak, is also invincible, and also involuntary, as that of these poor and these dumb. Is it, then, agreeable to the equity and goodness of God to punish them for it? It appears to me that this

even furnishes us with a proof altogether new, which might be added to those which I have proposed. I ask, in fact, whether a conversion in which death prevents the realizing of such consequences as would otherwise have infallibly followed, is a true conversion, or not? If it be not so, how is it possible that God should have once been satisfied with it, after having declared so expressly that if we are not converted in time we are lost without remedy? If it is, how is it possible that God can reject it? In a word, to reason accordingly, we must say, either that a late repentance is always useless, or that it never is so. Thus, it being impossible to take the first of these grounds, as it appears by the example of the penitent thief, we must of necessity take the second, and say that sincere conversion is always effectual.

MEDITATION UPON THE MERCY OF GOD.

It is difficult to imagine a state more sad than that in which I find myself at present. I am about leaving the world, and presenting myself before the bar of my Judge to render unto him an account of my actions. But, my God! what account can I render to him? and in what condition am I to present myself before him? I have committed,

in my life past, an infinite number of sins. All these sins are not equally atrocious, it is true; but the least would entirely deserve the punishment of hell: and yet there is a considerable number of offences extremely great, both by their nature, and by the circumstances which have attended them. I have endeavored to extenuate them during my life; but now I plainly see that all I have been able to say or think to justify myself, far from having produced this effect, has only served to render me more culpable; all this constituting a particular order of sins, which are about to reproach me, and for which I shall be obliged to render an account. What adds the greatest terror to my calamity is, that among so great a number of sins as that with which my life has been polluted, there has not been one which has been pardoned, because there has not been one of which I have truly repented. All my life has been passed in an idolatrous worship of the world, and in offending God. Thus I must answer before the bar of my Judge for that prodigious number of sins with which I reproach myself, and for that other number, much greater still than the preceding, of sins forgotten, without speaking of those which I have never remarked, and which my conscience has suffered to pass without apprizing me of their turpitude.

Even at the moment I am speaking, at this moment which, according to all appearance, is one of the last in my life; in this moment, even, I have to repent, and to take the first step for my conversion and for my salvation. Is it possible to imagine a more just occasion to fear?

But I express myself too feebly: I should not merely fear, I should tremble: and it is difficult to conceive that my dread could be excessive. Nevertheless, it is certain that I ought not to abandon myself to despair. God has expressly forbidden this. He has even commanded me to hope. And if my conscience presents me to myself in respect to my sins as the most grievous and dreadful of all objects, faith presents me in another, and incomparably more consoling than the other is frightful, the infinite and incomprehensible mercy of the Judge whom I have so basely and so unworthily offended. Yes, my God, thy mercy infinitely transcends my sins, which are so great in every sense, and which I have taken such pains to carry to their utmost excess. It is not impossible still to add to the enormity of these sins, but it is impossible to add to the infinite extent of thine adorable mercy. What proofs have I not of the infinite extent both of the goodness and compassions of my God? Though I had no other proof of it than the patience

with which he has endured my excesses, waiting for me always, and inviting me even to repent and to implore his clemency, should I not have had sufficient to forbid me to doubt of it? It is so long a time that I have offended him, and violated his holy laws. The very first time that I indulged in sin, it had been right in him to punish me for it. His justice would have authorized him to do it. It might have even powerfully solicited him to do it. He notwithstanding did it not; and although this first sin was followed with a thousand others still greater, his goodness has always restrained his formidable arm. I have always subsisted, and still subsist. The lightning of his wrath has not yet consumed me. The earth has not yet opened under my feet to swallow me in its abyss; and the devils who have so often desired permission to drag me to hell, have not yet obtained it.

Do I need other proofs to convince me that the mercy of God is a great deep, which the thoughts of the most enlightened of men, which the intelligence even of angels vainly seek to fathom? Moreover, it is not only true that God has endured my excesses: it is not only true that he has waited for my repentance, and waits for it still: besides all this, he has used various methods to excite it in my heart, and to overcome the hardness of this

heart by every means best calculated, as well to break as to soften it, and to inspire it with thoughts the most opposite to those which have thus far maintained the dominion over it. How many benefits has he not bestowed! From how many dangers has he not preserved me! How many objects well fitted to awaken me from my lethargy has not his providence presented to my view! How many warnings has he not afforded me by his ministers! How often has not his spirit moved secretly in my heart? Hardly have I resisted one of these dictates before I have experienced a second and a third. In a word, when I consider all that has passed between God and my heart, it might be said there had been a perpetual warfare, without truce or cessation, between his blessings and my blindness; since, as he has never ceased to act to prevent me from destroying myself, I have never ceased to use all my exertions to oblige him to relinquish the design of my salvation. But should I forget the most remarkable proof that I can have of his infinite mercy? This is, that even now access to this source of grace is by no means forbidden me. It is, that even now, when I am approaching the end of my life, of this life, which has been only a tissue of crimes, even now my God extends his arms and calls me. Yes, my God, I hear thy

sweet, thy divine voice, which reaches even to the bottom of my heart. Thou dost manifest thyself very intelligibly. Thou speakest even in many ways. Thou speakest by thine aid. Thou speakest by the liberty of my mind and of my reason, which it pleaseth thee to preserve to me. Thou speakest by all that I now feel in my heart, and which, not being possible to proceed from this heart, naturally so incapable of good dispositions, and so confirmed in evil, by the uninterrupted course of my evil actions, could not arise but from thyself, and could be the work of thy grace only. I have continued, finally, to be deaf to this voice, O my God; and after having so often and so inconsiderately stifled it, I take occasion to respond to it, not only by the admiration of thine incomprehensible blessings, not only by deep-felt gratitude, which I offer thee, but besides, by the request that I make that thou wouldst quickly finish the work for which thou laborest so long, rendering thee thereby the master of this miserable heart, which thou dost address in so persuasive a manner.

It is time, LORD, that after having knocked so often at the door of this rebellious heart, thou dost open it at last by the omnipotent and invincible operation of thy grace. It is time that thou shouldst absolutely expel the demon which hath

thus far reigned over it. It is time that thou shouldst destroy this principle of sin and corruption which hath been the cause of so much excess. It is time that thy love should supersede the love of the world, by which it hath been so entirely possessed. In a few moments, time shall be no more to me. What thou hast hitherto given me is about ending. Hasten, merciful Father, before it expires! Proportion the readiness of thy help to the necessity I am in, and which could not be more pressing, since by a little delay I would be irrecoverably lost! All my conduct, O my God, enables me clearly to perceive that my salvation is not indifferent to thee. I dare to assert that thou hast it at heart, although it may be evident that thou couldst have no other interest in it than that which thy mercy alone hath inclined thee to take. Moreover, thou couldst not expect this work, either of me, or of any other of thy creatures. There is nothing but thine hand is capable to accomplish it. But this hand is also in a condition to produce it with the utmost facility, as well in one moment as in another. It required but one word for the first creation: it requires no more for the second. One word of thy holy Son called Lazarus from the grave: one such word could draw me from the grave of vice, and restore to my soul that spiritual life of which it hath been

so long deprived. Speak this word, O merciful Father: thou who didst command the light to shine out of darkness, "*shine thyself in my heart, to give me the light of the knowledge of thy glory in the face of JESUS CHRIST.*" Thou hast spoken sufficiently to my ears; but of what avail will be this word if thou dost not speak inwardly to my heart? What will it profit me to be acquainted with my duty if thou givest me no power to perform it? Give me this power, O God, or rather perform thyself the whole of this work. Work in me to desire, to will, and to do. Renew me entirely, and grant, that as sin has stained and infected all the faculties of my soul, there may be nothing which thy grace may not re-establish in a state of purity and holiness, so that there may be nothing in me but what may please thee, and draw down thy benedictions.

CHAPTER IX.

THAT THE SINNER, CONVINCED OF THE EVIL STATE OF HIS HEART, SHOULD NOT NEGLECT ANY THING WHICH MIGHT CONTRIBUTE TO HIS CONVERSION.

IF it be true that conversion may be a means on the one hand absolutely necessary, and on the other perfectly sufficient to secure the salvation of the greatest sinners, as we may have seen in the preceding chapter, it is evident that he of whom we speak could not refuse to employ this means without neglecting the greatest of his interests, and without acting directly contrary to the most natural and the most legitimate dictate of his heart, which is self-love. But this is not all: if it is necessary to be converted, and if this sinner has only a few moments in which to do so, should he not on the one hand in such manner improve all these moments, however short, in this alone; and on the other, apply himself to it with all his might, and all the earnestness of which he is capable? For as to the first, could ever distraction be more insupportable than on this occasion? The sinner of whom I speak shall be judged in a moment after. The sentence which

shall be pronounced upon him shall decide his destiny to all eternity. He is upon the point of seeing himself eternally happy or eternally miserable. And this object, so great in every sense, will not be sufficient, in his judgment, to fill all the capacity of his feeble and finite mind. This mind will have thoughts to bestow and moments to employ upon other subjects. Can we imagine a stupidity like this? It is here we may apply the thought of M. Pascal, by adding to it something to make it a little more just in respect to our subject.

We have only to imagine a man confined in a dungeon. He knows that his judges have already commenced the trial of his case. He knows that his sentence will be pronounced in an hour; and being once pronounced, it will never be revoked. This sentence depends in a certain sense upon prevention. He may yet advance some plea, which will render them favorable to him: but if he neglects to do all he can, he will be infallibly condemned. He knows this; he is warned of this; and instead of improving the few remaining moments, he voluntarily loses them; he amuses himself with sport and diversion. Can we imagine a more insensate conduct? This representation is forcible, but it does not come up to the importance of our subject. The negligence

of this prisoner could not have naturally any other consequence than the loss of a life sufficiently miserable, since it is no other than a tissue of crimes and amusements. But the negligence of the dying, who think not sufficiently of death, is infallibly followed by the loss of life eternal. Thus, as much as this life eternal is more precious than that which is temporal; as much as the punishments of hell are more formidable than those to which the judges of the earth could condemn us, so much more the negligence of those who improve not their last moments is more fatal than that of the prisoner of whom I have spoken. But it is not sufficient to think of this alone; he must also think strongly; or rather, he must labor with diligence: he must use his utmost exertions for it. In fact, true conversion is a work so difficult, that without the help of a supernatural and omnipotent grace, it would be impossible. It must change the whole constitution of the heart; it must give it new desires, or at least it must present new objects to all those desires. Instead of our hearts neither loving, nor desiring, nor seeking any thing but the creature, it must neither love, desire, nor seek any thing but God. Instead of all our cares being centred in earth, they should be raised to heaven. What exertion, what diligence is there not requisite for success!

Should we not take into account as of some importance, the attacks of the devil, who seems to redouble his efforts upon an occasion which is so favorable to him, and which gives him so great an opportunity to overcome us? I know at the same time, that we can defeat all his efforts by a vigorous resistance. But is this resistance not to think of what we are doing, or to think of it carelessly? This is what he desires, and nothing contributes more to give success to his pernicious designs.

Many imagine that all the efforts of the devil at such a moment, tend only to alarm us, to cast us by this means into despair; and I do not deny that he thus sometimes labors to do this. But I am persuaded, that among all the attacks to which we are exposed on these occasions, this is on one hand most rare, and on the other the least dangerous. It is not by despair that this wicked spirit chiefly establishes his dominion: on the contrary, it is by security and by negligence. His greatest pains on these occasions are taken either to lull us to sleep or to distract us. He endeavors to occupy us with every other thing than that alone upon which we ought to think. It is thus he would prevent our escape from him, while alarm, fear and terror might lead us effectually to implore the mercy of God with all the

ardor necessary to obtain the desired result. It is, then, our duty on these occasions first to remove from our mind all the thoughts which tend not to excite the feelings which should be formed in the soul, and at the same time to recollect ourselves, and to seek with all diligence, and with all the exertion of which we are capable in this situation, to render these feelings the most lively and the most fervent that will be possible. But as we are incapable of doing any thing without grace, we must implore it humbly and ardently. This may be done by the following prayer.

PRAYER.

It well becomes me, LORD, to entertain an exalted idea of thy mercy and of thy goodness, since I presume to apply unto thee for that aid which is so necessary to me on this occasion. Though I should have at this hour all the repentance which I take the liberty to solicit of thee; though, in a word, I should have all I am wanting, I acknowledge thou mightst have no regard for it, and leave me to my punishment, and precipitate me into hell. Thy justice has nothing to oppose this, and I acknowledge that I have but too well deserved it. Having refused to serve

thee during my life, I would well deserve to be cast off of thee at my death. The division which I make of my life having given almost all to sin and to the devil, and reserving to thee only the few moments which may yet remain for me, this division, I say, would deserve that thou shouldst refuse to grant my request, and that thou shouldst send me back to those idols of vanity which I have so sinfully worshipped, and which now are unable to render me the least assistance. Thus, it would be a great exertion of mercy even to accept a repentance so slow and so long delayed as mine, and it would be just that I should implore it of thee with the utmost effort of my heart. This is, nevertheless, O my God, the request which I have to make. I have not this repentance which I ought to pray thee to accept: I think only of exciting it in my heart: or rather, I cast myself at thy footstool, to beseech thee thyself to produce it. I find myself as little in a situation to feel it now, as in the other moments of my life. I find by my experience, that something more is requisite than the opportunities and the outward helps for true and sincere conversion. It is necessary that thy hand should display itself, and that thy spirit should act. It is necessary in my case, that thou shouldst translate me from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of the mar-

vellous light of thy dear Son. It is necessary that thou enlighten my mind, that thou renew my heart, that thou convert me, and that thou change me. Refuse me not this wonderful effect of thy mercy and of thy power, compassionate Redeemer of men. Come bind within me this strong man who has so peaceably held his dominion. Come pluck him from the dominion of this heart, which has been subject to him, and of which he has had such absolute disposal during all the course of my life. Disdain not to render thyself the master of it, and to subject all its thoughts to thy will. Above all, LORD, refuse not to awaken therein the divine flames of thy love, and to grant, that instead of sighing as it has until now for earthly advantages, it may now sigh only for thee; seeking only on one hand to please thee, and on the other to possess thee.

I am very unworthy, O my God, to obtain so precious a favor, but it is not unworthy of thee to grant it me. The abundance of thy mercy supplies all that is wanting in the dispositions of my heart, which might induce thee to grant it me: and moreover, if I could not be acceptable of myself, I may become so by being united to thy holy Son, to that dear object of thy love who ever receives into communion with him those who seek him with faith and with confidence.

Grant me, LORD, on this account, what I now desire, and for this reason hear the prayer which he hath commanded me to offer, and which I have ground to hope he will attend with his intercession.

Our Father, &c.

CHAPTER X.

WHAT A DYING PERSON SHOULD DO FOR HIS CONVERSION.

THERE is, therefore, nothing that a sinner should neglect on these occasions. But shall it be said, What must be done, and what are the particular pains we are to take? This it will be well to notice more distinctly. He should, then, in the first place, call to mind all he has done in his life, and compare it with what he should have done. If he well considers this thought for a few moments, he will clearly see two things: the first, that he has absolutely done nothing, either to serve God, or for his own salvation. For truly, the few resolutions he has made, and which remain unexecuted, and the few outward actions he has performed, unattended by any inward principle which should impart to them all their value, — all this, I say, appears to him less than nothing in comparison with what his duty and interest should oblige him to do. In the second place, he will see clearly and distinctly that he has committed an infinite number of sins of all descriptions: sins of omission and of commission; of thought, of word and of deed; sins of ignorance,

of infirmity and of malice ; sins known and deliberate, as well as sins unknown and unpremeditated ; secret sins, as well as public and scandalous ; sins against God, against his neighbor, and against himself. Hence he draws two conclusions : — First, that his conduct has been precisely what it would have been even if perhaps he might have been persuaded there was no God, or that this God has no regard for the actions of men, or that though they displease him, he is neither sufficiently powerful nor just to punish them. With whichever of these ideas he might have been possessed, what could he have done other than what he has done ? Second, that he has done all the same as if he had not cared to perish, and as if to him it had been indifferent whether he were eternally happy or eternally miserable. Nothing doubting these truths, he will find no difficulty in persuading himself of the following.

I. That nothing could be more brutish, and more opposed to all the lights of reason and good sense than his past conduct. For, indeed, how could he act more directly contrary to the most common notions, than in neglecting, as he has done, an interest so great as that of his salvation, in deigning to do nothing to procure so great and so considerable a blessing as that which God offers us in his Gospel, and which he is prepared

to give us in his heaven, and (which in the highest degree enhances this blindness and madness,) that too by doing with so little exertion all which is needful thereto, not only to deprive himself of this blessedness, but to hurry himself into a misery the extent of which, indeed, he does not comprehend, but which he at least knows surpasses his imagination.

II. This blindness will appear to him still more insupportable when he shall come to consider what have been the motives which have hindered him from acting otherwise. He will see that they were interests so small, so contemptible, so unworthy to receive so much attention, that he will with difficulty conceive how so small a thing had been able to make any impression upon his mind. He will see that they were all temporal advantages, attached to earth and confined to the short and narrow space of this life; advantages incapable to render even this life happy; deceiving advantages, and which consisted only in appearance, destitute of all kind of reality; advantages, finally, very small, each of its kind, and which, however we viewed them, could not enter into comparison with salvation.

III. He will remark in his conduct a frightful injustice. He is the work of God. It was consequently just that he should submit to him and

serve him. Instead of doing this, he has been engaged only in offending him. God has placed him in the world and given him life only that he should do his will. He has been occupied in altogether another thing.

IV. He will see an extreme ingratitude. God has loaded him with benefits. He has shed upon him blessings innumerable. He has granted them to him of all kinds, common and particular, temporal and spiritual. He has preserved him from a thousand dangers; and instead of responding to all these favors by a lively and sincere gratitude, and by a constant and perpetual care, to honor and to serve him who was their author, he has been employed only in disobeying him, and in doing whatever he could that might be disagreeable to him.

V. He will remark in it a profane and intolerable contempt of all that there is in God most great and most worthy our veneration and love. A contempt of his authority, since he has done all that God has forbidden him: a contempt of his vengeance, since he has taken so little care to hide himself from it: a contempt of his liberality and of his benefits, since he has not deigned to do any thing to procure them: a contempt of his love, since he has had no concern to be the object

of it: a contempt of possessing him, since he has not deigned to desire it.

His conduct appearing to him thus frightful, it is impossible that he should not condemn it, that he should not detest it, that he should not abhor it. However this may be, it should cause him truly to repent. *He should "judge himself, that so he be not judged of the LORD," as speaks an Apostle.*

This is what we may also remark in those whose repentance the Scripture proposes to us as an example which we should imitate. Particularly let the 51st Psalm be read, and the prayer of Daniel, given at the ninth chapter of the book of that prophet. We shall see the idea which these holy men had of sins for which they besought the pardon of God. But this, although necessary, is not sufficient. In fact, we may remark this in the case of Judas: what he says, "*I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood,*" shows this clearly. But the act of his self-destruction to escape the inward punishments which a view of his sin occasioned, proves it in a manner yet more evident. We must, therefore, besides all this, have a lively grief for what we have done. We must not only be convinced that we were wrong to have done it, but moreover, we should be afflicted that we have done it, and experience

all that self-reproach which we should feel in the reflection that it is by our fault that we have fallen into some great misfortune which we ought and could have avoided. This is the grief which Scripture calls contrition. It represents the heart of the penitent sinner as bruised, his bones even as broken, to make us understand that the sinner could not suffer more if these parts of his body were crushed and broken in pieces. This pain should amount to a hatred and detestation of sin, and consequently to a sincere and determined renunciation of it; to a love of holiness and righteousness, and to the forming of a strong resolution strictly to fulfil the duties, at least those which the state wherein we are found, and the short space of time we have for it, permit us to discharge.

Finally, the sinner should humbly implore the mercy of God, and ask of him pardon for all the offences he has been so wretched as to commit. But to render this prayer the more efficacious, we must in the first instance offer it with ardor and vehemence, which is not difficult to those whose repentance is such as I have described, and who, besides, in some degree comprehend the desire which they have to obtain this favor of the mercy of God. This request must also be inspired by a holy confidence in this mercy which it implores.

We must be assured, that provided the prayer which we address to him is such as it ought to be, it is impossible that it should not be heard, and should not obtain all it desires. And as God never pardons our sins except by imputing to us the perfect satisfaction which his holy Son has made by suffering death upon the cross, and as, moreover, this satisfaction is offered to us in the Gospel, it is the duty of the converted sinner to accept it with a lively and profound gratitude, to consent that it should be imputed to him, and even to desire it, and to ask it of God, saying as his Apostle does, "*that I may be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is by faith in JESUS CHRIST.*" These feelings may be expressed by this prayer.

PRAYER.

O LORD my God, I cast myself before thee to implore thy compassions, but it is with extreme fear and dread: for little as I have regarded thy holiness and justice, as well as the fearful disorders of my past life, I cannot but be dismayed, and scarcely can I avoid falling into despair. I know that thou hast a detestation of crime, and that of all the objects which present themselves

to thy knowledge, it is this which most displeases thee, or rather, it is this alone which displeases thee, and which provokes thy formidable vengeance. I know, on the other hand, that it is difficult for offences to be more aggravated than those which I observe in my past conduct, and in all the course of my actions.

What a prodigious number of these excesses is at once presented to my mind! With what facility, with how little reluctance have I not committed the greater number of these! With how many odious circumstances have they not been attended! Above all, LORD, that which aggravates my grief and covers me with confusion, is the obstinacy with which I have persevered in committing them. I have been so long a time in the world, and though I should have employed this time in thy service and in seeking my salvation, I have consumed it in offending thee, and in the destruction of myself. I have not been divided between thee and the world: I have given all to the world, and refused thee every thing. Far from being able to count the years which I have consecrated to thee, I cannot find a day even in all my life which I have passed in serving thee in spirit and in truth. At the most, I have approached thee with my lips and with my mouth, but my heart has been always far from thee. This heart has been always

possessed by the love of the perishable things of sense; it is only after these vain objects that it hath sighed. I have labored only to acquire these. And for thee, my God, very far from seeking thee, very far from studying to please thee, I have wantonly and shamefully offended thee, and thy holy law hath no precept which I have not violated in various ways. Nevertheless, LORD, in the time when I did offend thee with so little remorse and so much licentiousness, how many were the favors and benefits which I received of thee? How many temporal blessings hast thou not shed upon me? How many warnings hast thou not given me, and spiritual helps? How often has thy word knocked at the door of my heart, and thy holy Spirit called upon me to awake from my lethargy, and change the course of my life? Notwithstanding all this, LORD, I have not failed to persist in my irregularities, and to abandon myself to sin with as little reserve as if I had been sure that thou takest no account of our actions. What have I not deserved by a conduct so reprehensible? Is there an abyss in hell of whose punishments I am not deserving, and the severity of which would exceed the atrocity of so great a number of sins? I confess them to thee, O my God, and acknowledge to thee, that thou couldst not only destroy me and render me eter-

nally miserable without doing me injustice, but it must be that thy mercy is infinite and incomprehensible, since I am not actually suffering what the most wretched of the damned are condemned to endure in hell. But, my God, if thy mercy hath been sufficiently great to suspend until this hour the sentence of my death, shall it not be enough to pronounce the sentence of my absolution and of my pardon? Thou hast thus far waited for me, O LORD, and thou dost still wait for me, yet thy patience is not exhausted. Thou dost even call me, thou dost entreat me to go to thee and accept thy reconciliation and thy peace; thou dost open to me the arms of thy compassions: wilt thou reject me if I cast myself into them with ardor and with confidence? No, my God; such a course would not agree either with thy perfections, or with the declarations of thy will which I find in thy word. It is very certain that I am a sinner, but it is certain also, that thou willest not the death of a sinner: thou willest that they should turn unto thee and live.

I repent, O my God; I am grieved at what I have done: I condemn, I detest my conduct; I am filled with horror and confusion; and since thy holy Son JESUS hath expiated all my offences by the shedding of his blood, and hath fully satisfied thee for all the transgressions I have com-

mitted, in view of this precious blood, on account of this perfect satisfaction, receive me to thy favor, merciful Father.

Pardon my sins past; blot them out by a full and entire remission; and grant, that when I shall present myself before thy bar, I may present myself without fear of condemnation. In a word, LORD, however deserving I may be to perish, yet be pleased to save me in the name and by the merit of thy holy Son, who with this intent hath come down from heaven to earth, and having bought me by his death, intercedes for me in thy heaven, and presents to thee my prayers. Hear them, O my God, for the love of this great Saviour: it is in his name that I implore thee.

Our Father, &c.

CHAPTER XI.

WHAT SHOULD BE THE REPENTANCE OF A DYING PERSON.

It must be a fearful impiety not to repent, at least when we approach the hour of death. This is also a thing so extraordinary, that we see but few examples of it. All, or nearly all, then repent, well or ill. But it must be confessed, that there are very few whose repentance is such as it ought to be to secure their peace with God. It is neither sufficiently lively nor sufficiently sincere to produce this great effect.

It may be seen in my Abridgment of Morality what are my ideas of repentance. I have there shown, as distinctly as I could, its most certain characteristics. I might thus dispense with saying any thing of it at present, and direct my readers to this other work. But as this may fall into the hands of those who have not seen the first, it will not be amiss briefly here to speak of what I have explained more at length in another work. I say, then, in the first place, that the grief which gives rise to the repentance of a dying person ought to be in the highest degree acute; it ought even, if possible, to be more so than it was during

life: the reason of which is, that the vehemence of the grief should be proportioned not only to the atrocity, but also to the number of the sins of which we repent. Who, therefore, sees not that the number of those sins is much greater when we come to die than they were during life, since we are always adding something new to them; and we cease not to sin but by ceasing to live.

Moreover, the motives to repentance which actuate us in life are opposed, and consequently enfeebled by the false flatteries of sin. We look with regret upon the temporal advantages which it procures, and this occasions us never sufficiently to detest it. But it is not thus at death. Nothing then hinders us from seeing sin as it is, and perceiving distinctly its atrocity, we should hate it, and should be grieved that we should have ever committed it. Consequently, if we do it not, or if in doing it we have only a slight and superficial grief, it would clearly appear that we have nothing good in our heart, and thus that we are not truly converted. The schoolmen maintain that this grief should surpass every other grief, if not in vehemence, at least in that which they call "*appreciation*." This is their idea. There are two indications by which we may judge which of the two griefs, when compared one with another, is most powerful. One is the emotion or sensible

impression which this grief makes in our heart. The other is the evidence we give to it that we would rather suffer the evil which causes one of these griefs, than that which occasions the other. They, therefore, say that it may easily happen that a temporal evil may make a more lively impression in the soul, and excite there more trouble and agitation than the sense of sin, without which repentance would be useless. But they maintain that if this repentance is good and salutary, he who realizes it will be so disposed that if he had his choice he would desire rather to suffer the most severe of temporal evils than commit the sins for which he should repent.

Nothing is more true than this. For first it is certain, that sensible objects make in our heart a far more lively impression than those which are spiritual. This is a necessary and inevitable consequence of the laws of union between soul and body. Consequently, if we should judge of the vehemence of grief by this impression, we should always, or almost always, have occasion to assure ourselves that we had not savingly repented, since it almost always happens that the grief which constitutes one of the parts of repentance should be as perceptible as that which occasions the suffering of temporal evils.

On the other hand, it is absolutely necessary that a man who repents should consider sin as an evil greater than all temporal evils. If he does not thus consider them, the temporal advantages opposed to those evils would appear greater and more precious than the advantage of pleasing God and performing his will. Thus he would love these advantages more than he loves God, in which the essence of sin consists.

Sin, then, would be always the absolute master of his heart, and thus he would altogether fail to be converted. I believe, then, that this is necessary, but I do not believe it sufficient. A self-love well directed and enlightened, might go thus far. In fact, a man well persuaded of the truths of salvation might see clearly that it is more for his advantage to suffer the severest of all temporal evils, than eternally to lose himself, as he might do by a single sin. Thus his own interest might lead him to prefer to suffer these evils than to commit or to have committed this sin. I must, therefore, add something to what I have already said on this subject.

It must, of necessity, occur, that the grief which is occasioned by the sins for which we reproach ourselves arises elsewhere than from a consideration of our own interest. It must arise from a view of their turpitude, which discovers them to

be frightful and intolerable in themselves, and independently of the unhappy consequences which they may occasion. But above all, it must arise from this consideration; that these sins are equally an outrage against God, against that God so supremely to be loved, that God to whom we owe such obligations, who dwells with us; that God, in a word, whom we should supremely and exclusively love.

This is, doubtless, the most essential part of a true conversion. It is also certain that if we have this, the remaining requisites will not be wanting. Two things more are necessary. The first is a true renunciation of all those sins of which we repent: we must adopt sentiments directly opposed to those which we reproach ourselves for having entertained. Instead of that envy, hatred and malice which we formerly cherished toward our neighbor, we must love them, and love them tenderly. Instead of that vanity and pride with which we had been blinded, we must humble ourselves both before God and before men. Instead of an excessive attachment for the world, we must regard it with contempt. But this is not all: we must repair the evil which we have done whenever we can, while we have the means. Without this, all the rest is very useless, or more properly speaking, without this we do nothing:

without this, we have neither repentance, nor faith, nor charity, nor any thing else. We may have ruined the reputation of a neighbor, as well by calumnies maliciously invented, as by rash judgments, and without any foundation; as also by a blameable levity, which may have led us to spread unfavorable reports without having an entire certainty of their truth. We cannot be ignorant of the obligation we are under, to restore to our neighbor the honor and good reputation which we have not scrupled to take from him. We have, nevertheless, lived, and we die at last without discharging a duty so just and so necessary. We prefer rather to go before God with all the injustice of a conduct so detestable. We prefer exposing ourselves to all the vengeance which it is certain he will soon execute, and that through all eternity, rather than publicly to acknowledge the injury we have inflicted by acting in a manner so criminal. We have deprived our neighbor of his property by fraud, by violence, and by injustice. We have applied it to our own use without reason and without foundation. We have dishonestly retained it during the whole course of our lives; and although we cannot any longer hold it, we die without restoring it to him to whom it properly belongs. We ruin ourselves, we ruin our children, we leave them the hatred

and the curse of God for an inheritance; and we, in a word, prefer that all should eternally perish rather than overturn by one act of justice, a miserable establishment which we may have formed. Can we imagine a more fearful extremity than this? Nevertheless, we know it is but too ordinary. We know there are few persons in the world who have never committed injustice: but we also at the same time know there are far fewer who, having committed it, repair it, either in life or even at death.

This would instruct us in what we surely must know; that there are very few who do not perish, that there are very few who die in the LORD; that the greater number, that almost all constantly pursue the broad way which leadeth unto death; since almost all, after having lived in injustice and impenitence, die in these same dispositions. Amid this great number of occasions which we have to groan and sigh, have we many as just as this? And must it not be to take very little interest in the salvation of the world, to feel no emotion in thus seeing the greater part of those we know, die in this manner? Here are some of the principal marks by which we may discover whether repentance is sincere. We need only add, that it is not sufficient that we should remark one or two among those we feel in our heart, in

order to a favorable judgment ; we must find them all, without exception, and the absence of only one is sufficient to persuade us that the repentance to which this is wanting, is vain and useless.

CHAPTER XII.

IN WHAT MANNER WE SHOULD BE ENGAGED AFTER HAVING
DONE THAT WHICH HAS BEEN SHOWN IN THE PRECEDING
CHAPTERS,

If the sinner of whom I speak strictly performs what has thus far engaged our consideration, he has reason to promise himself all the expressions of the mercy of God in time and in eternity. But as it is very possible that he may not expire immediately after having done this, and that God may allow him yet for some time the freedom of his mind, it is well to know how he should employ all this time which the divine mercy gives him.

I say, then, in the first place, that he should from time to time repeat all those acts which I have pointed out: they are all very right and very proper: they are all conformed to the will of God. It is not, therefore, possible that they should not please him, and that they should not always, whenever they are performed, bring some new grace, some effect of his love and of his goodness. Besides, these acts can never have too much intensity or ardor. The more they have, the more they are conformed to our duty; the

more, consequently, they please God. Who, therefore, can doubt but in their frequent repetition we may not find the means of exciting them to this ardor and intensity, which as yet may be wanting in them. Is not this what occurs almost every day, and upon almost every subject? Is it not true, that the first time we perform an act we succeed not as well as when we are practised in it, and have made it a habit? There is, besides, this advantage in such a course. By reiterating these acts, we observe their defects, and consequently place ourselves in the way of correcting them, and of supplying all that we see deficient, to which it is certain we cannot apply ourselves with too much care.

It is also certain that if love to God and a desire of salvation, which combine to form these acts, powerfully engage the heart, we shall be incessantly occupied in them; we shall continually think of them; and in this manner perform anew what these motives had already determined us to do. We shall even perform them undesignedly, and by natural consequence of that disposition in which the heart finds itself. Among the acts which, for all these reasons, it concerns us to reiterate, there are few more necessary than prayer. Nothing is better suited to a dying person; never have we greater need of the influences

of the Divine goodness and mercy than on that occasion: never should we, therefore, ask it of him with greater importunity.

We observe, also, in Scripture, how the saints applied themselves to this exercise in the last moments of their life. It is with this they endeavored to finish. St. Stephen, overwhelmed by the stones of the Jews, thinks not of flying or escaping; he is only occupied in prayer to God. He bends his knees, he casts himself upon the ground as he would have done in the most tranquil state of his life. JESUS CHRIST does the same; he prepares himself for death by prayer; he prostrates himself upon the ground three several times in the garden of Gethsemane; he continues on the cross; and, in a word, he ceases not to pray till he ceased to live. Who can doubt but that the example of this great Saviour should be a model which we should imitate? Who sees not, hence, that there is nothing to which the dying should apply themselves with greater care than this important duty of Christianity? St. Paul commands us in one passage of his sacred writings, to "*continue instant*" (or *constant*) "*in prayer*;" and in another, to "*pray without ceasing*." God commands us particularly to call on him in trouble; and there is no doubt the more violent the evil we suffer, the more terrible the

danger we run, the more limited the time we are allowed for seeking protection, we should be proportionably eager to provide against all these things. Thus, all this occurring at death, it is evident that it is chiefly then we should lift our eyes and heart to God, to implore his help and to ask of him all his graces of which we have so pressing a need. But who can doubt this? It is not, therefore, necessary to occupy the reader's time by adducing its proofs. It will be sufficient only to say, that it is of little importance to make long and continuous prayers. This is extremely difficult on these occasions, and is by no means necessary. It is sufficient to ask of God briefly both the pardon of sins, the help of his grace, the strengthening of faith, victory over temptations to which we find ourselves exposed; we need no more to obtain of God all these evidences of his love and of his goodness. If, however, we have the mind sufficiently at liberty to make an extended prayer, we may avail ourselves of this form.

PRAYER.

I cast myself at thy feet, merciful Father, to ask of thee all the helps and all the graces of which I stand in need at this juncture. This is

the only mean I can employ that nothing may be omitted. Indeed, LORD, I am doubtless ignorant of some of the favors which are requisite to me. I know neither all my miseries nor all the designs of thy goodness which could afford me a remedy for them. But I know, LORD, that thou knowest all things of which I am ignorant. Thus I take the resolution to conduct myself, not by my feeble and limited lights, but by thine, which are infinite, and from which absolutely nothing can be hid. Give to me, then, O my God, all which thou seest thyself I need in the sad estate in which I find myself. Deny me nothing of that which may be necessary to me, of that which may even be useful to me. Above all, O my God, establish my faith, confirm my hope, inflame my love; complete, by the efficacy of thy Spirit, the severance of all my attachments for the earth, and make my heart to turn solely to thee. Thee may it seek, thee may it find, to thee may it be united in holiness, never to be separated, either in time or eternity. I ask of thee nothing for my body; let it suffer and die, and return to the dust from whence it was taken: to this I consent. But, my God, I implore thy clemency and thy goodness for my soul. Suffer it not to perish, O merciful Father; suffer not that so many favors thou hast granted it should all be in vain; suffer not

that the precious blood of thy Son, which was shed for it, should have been in this respect without effect. Give me all that is necessary to profit by this prodigy of thy love and of thy goodness. I know that my sins are opposed to it; I know that they incessantly call to thy justice to destroy and to punish me. But, my God, all these sins have been fully and perfectly expiated by the sacrifice which thy Son hath offered thee on the cross; and thou hast besides pledged thyself to forget all those of which we ask thy pardon with faith and with repentance.

Thus would I ask, O my God. I entreat thee in the name of thy Son, and by all the merit of his death, to grant it. Blot out, LORD, blot out by a full and entire remission, all the impurities of my life. Look not upon what I have done, but upon what thy Son hath done and suffered for me. Turn away thine eyes from my actions to consider the bitter passion of my Redeemer; in order that as much as I have displeased thee in myself, I may please thee in this dear object of thy love, in whom I hope to live and to die, not being able otherwise to reign with thee in thine immortality and glory.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DYING SHOULD EXCITE THEMSELVES TO LOVE GOD WITH
A LOVE OF INTEREST.

ANOTHER care which we should take, and which is extremely important, is that of exciting ourselves to love God, and to love him ardently and sincerely. In fact, the love of God is the great principle of all the good we are enabled to do, and we may assure ourselves that we are more or less advanced in piety and in sanctification as this love is more fervent or more languid. Thus laboring to give new force to this love, is to take the shortest way and most effectual method to promote our sanctification, and consequently our salvation.

But what should we do to excite ourselves to love God? This is easily shown. There is a twofold love of God; an interested and a disinterested love. By the first, we love God as our supreme good; as the foundation, the author, and the source of our happiness. By the second, we love him by gratitude for his goodness, and by admiration for his other perfections.

We should love in both these two ways.

We have, when dying, great inducement for the first of these duties. In fact, that which hinders us from loving God in this manner during life, is the attachment we feel for the things of time and sense. The Creator and the creature are like the two poles of our heart: we remove from the one as we approach the other. Thus the love of temporal advantages naturally creates the most formidable obstacles which hinder us from loving God. The love of the world is "*enmity against God*," as speaks an Apostle.

Since, then, we powerfully love the world during life, as it is the great object of our heart, it is not astonishing that we have such difficulty in loving God with that description of love which we call the love of interest. But it is not thus at death. This death itself removes this obstacle which hinders us from the performance of this duty. It does it even in two ways. First, by the state of languor, weakness and dejection into which it casts us. This alone is sufficient either to destroy entirely, or at least to suspend for a time the love of the perishing advantages of sense. In fact, a sick man reduced to the last extremities, thinks not any longer, either of pleasures, or amusements, or any other objects of this kind; or if he does think of them, it is coldly and without emotion. In a word, all this affects him not

as it did in health. Besides, a dying person sees very clearly that these advantages are forsaking him, or have forsaken him. He moreover finds by experience the truth of what has often been said to him, but of which he could not persuade himself, namely, the little use of these advantages which cannot give him any help in the extremity to which he is reduced. All this disposes him effectually to detach himself from them, and no longer to idolize these objects as before. All this, consequently, prepares him to love God, and to desire the possession of him, and to see his face. In fact, I am persuaded that it depends not on us to love or not to love; I speak always of a love of interest. We can well thus love one object sooner than another; we can love one to-day, and another to-morrow. Our love can extend itself to many objects at a time, and at length reunite upon one. But we must always necessarily love something, and this is a natural inclination of our heart to which we can offer no resistance. Consequently, to determine us to love God in this way, two things only are necessary. The one makes us know him; the other hinders us from loving other objects. This being granted, we bring ourselves to love him with the same necessity with which water flows in a particular direction when you leave it only a single opening, and

stop all others. As, then, the dying person of whom I speak knows by faith that God is the supreme good of the creature, as, besides, the state in which he is has considerable influence in curing the love of temporal things, it would seem quite natural that with all these aids he should be led with all his strength to love God. Nevertheless, we often see the reverse of this. We see that even in death itself, instead of sighing for the possession of God alone, he still clings to the world, as it would appear by the regret which he evinces, and by the reluctance with which he quits it. There must, then, be something more. He will be obliged to say to himself all that I have described. He will be required to represent to himself how great a blessing he enjoys in the possession of God, and at the same time, how great is the stupidity and blindness of those who care not for so great a blessing, or who even do not make it the principal object of their desires.

To this end, it is useful to consider that we can find in God alone all that is necessary to render us fully and perfectly happy. To render ourselves happy, we must obtain possession of that which is really good. In fact, an apparent blessing may at first impose upon us, it may dazzle us; but the illusion it creates cannot last long; it soon

disperses of itself, and our own experience disgusts us with it.

To render ourselves happy, we require an unchangeable good, and which runs no risk of being taken away from us. Without this, the most excellent advantages cannot satisfy us, because, in fact, the fear we have of losing them disturbs the pleasure we derive from their enjoyment. Finally, to be happy, we require an infinite good. In fact, the eagerness of our desires being infinite, any limited good is incapable to satisfy us. Instead of completing our wishes, such a good will serve only to irritate them. Thus, all created benefits being deficient in these qualities, and there being none but God alone who possesses them, it is evident that he alone can render us happy. It is certain, also, that we may find in him all that we can desire; light, holiness, pleasure, satisfaction, glory, power, riches; in a word, all the advantages that we can possibly imagine. Although then it might be true to say that God would not be as liberal and as kind toward us as faith teaches us he is, though he should have never granted us grace, it still should be sufficient for us to know that we cannot be happy but in the possession of him; and this should lead us with all our hearts to desire the possession of him, and consequently,

to love him with a love of interest. In fact, it is natural to desire to be happy. This is the most immediate consequence of self-love, if it be not essentially self-love, of which there is much probability. Thus, to place ourselves in a condition to discharge this duty, we have only firmly to persuade ourselves that God alone can render us happy: consequently, therefore, all that is requisite for us is, that we should possess faith, there being nothing that the word of God, which is the rule and foundation of faith, more clearly teaches than this capital truth. Let the dying believer never forget it: let him think always of the delights which a vision of the Divine countenance shall enable him to taste: let him say always with the Prophet, *“As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God; my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God? How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of Hosts: my soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee.*

PRAYER.

I know not, my God, which should most excite my astonishment; whether it be the excess of thy goodness and of thy condescension for me, or of my own stupidity and blindness. Both are depths and mysteries which surpass my comprehension. What am I, O ALMIGHTY GOD, that I should pretend to so great and inconceivable a blessing as that which thou dost offer me? Does it belong to a creature so vile, so abject, so criminal, so worthy of the severest punishments as it is certain and incontestible I am? Does it, I say, belong to such a creature to possess thee, thyself? I deserve not the possession of the least advantage: I have deserved to lose absolutely every thing, having abused all that it hath pleased thee to give me. Nevertheless, it is not only true that thou wilt give me some created and limited good, that thou wouldst even give me all, as in fact thy word unequivocally attests: but thou wilt give me thyself: thou wilt be not only my rewarder, but moreover my recompense. All the blessings in the world not sufficing to make me happy, and there being none but thyself who canst satisfy my desires, thou dost consent to allow me to possess myself of thee. What an excess of goodness; what a prodigy of love! Can I ever form an idea,

not only which may equal, but even which may approach it? What should, therefore, be my gratitude for so many favors? What my desire, what my ardor, what my impatience for the possession of such a blessing? What should, therefore, be my confusion to find, that instead of the transports I should feel at this hour, I find in my heart nothing but coldness and insensibility? Thou callest me to thee to possess thee; and instead of eagerly seizing so great a good, I remain stupid and unmoved, as if it were a question concerning some perishable and inconsiderable thing. If I cannot put an end to such stupidity, O my God; if I cannot relieve myself of it, yet I condemn, I detest, I abhor it. But as thy grace may set me free from it, and inspire sentiments which are opposed to it, I have recourse to thee; and with my whole heart I beseech thee not to refuse the help of this omnipotent and absolutely free grace, which thou never refusest to any who implore it with humility and faith. Grant, LORD, that I may desire thee alone, and that I may seek in thee alone a remedy for my ills, and a comfort for my sufferings. Fill my heart with love for thee, and desires for the possession of thyself. Overcome the stupidity and insensibility of this miserable heart, and grant that instead of grovelling in the dust, as it here-

tofore has done, it may rise above the heavens, and attach itself to thee, who art the only source of its happiness, and the only legitimate centre of its motion. In a word, LORD, grant that I may unite myself to thee with a correspondent love; that I may unite myself by a contemplation of thy immortal essence, and by the possession of thy glory and of thy bliss. Grant this, O merciful Father, for JESUS CHRIST's sake. Amen.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DYING SHOULD EXCITE THEMSELVES TO LOVE GOD WITH
A LOVE OF GRATITUDE.

THE duty of which I have spoken in the preceding chapter is doubtless very necessary : but it is also true that it is not sufficient. We must love God with a love of interest, but we must love him, above all, with a love of gratitude. The graces which he grants us must inspire an admiration of so much goodness, and lead us effectually to respond to them by a sincere and absolutely disinterested love, as speaks St. John : “ *We love him because he first loved us.*”

The most proper means to create and excite more and more these dispositions in our hearts, is, to consider with attention the motives which may inspire them. Many of these might be detailed, but there are three in particular to which I shall here confine myself ; the advantages which arise from the love which God has for us ; what he has considered needful to do that he might communicate them to us ; and what we have done ourselves to prevent their being shed upon us. For the first, we are indebted to the goodness of

GOD for all that we have had, and that we have lost; for all that yet remains, and for all that we hope to come; not having, nor even being capable to have, any actual good, any advantage, however unreal or unsubstantial, which comes not from the infinite goodness of GOD. "*What hast thou, O man,*" says his Apostle, "*that thou didst not receive?*" This is one consideration, but it is not all. Among these blessings which God has the goodness to grant us, there are some very precious in themselves, and very useful for us. What would become of us without remission of our sins? Could we without this inestimable favor, escape the punishments and miseries of hell, the gnawing of that worm which dieth not, the devouring heat of that fire which is never quenched? What would become of us without the supernatural helps of divine grace; without the assistance of the Holy Spirit? Left to ourselves, what could we do but sin, and consequently perish? Above all, should we forget the blessedness and glory which God prepares for us in his paradise? Here is not one benefit, but a combination of infinite benefits, which transcend the imagination, and surpass not only our merits, but our natural capacity also, in such a manner, that it would have been impossible to give possession of it to innocent man without raising his

nature above itself, and without placing it in a heavenly and supernatural state. We find in this blessedness all that can excite desire; and we find it on one hand so abundant, that it is impossible to increase it, not even by thought; and on the other, we find it all pure and separate, not only from evil, but from the shadow and the appearance of evil.

We find in it honor and glory; we find in it utility; we find in it pleasure and satisfaction; and what is more, each of these blessings is not only infinite, but eternal; what endures for ever, and shall never end. What, then, could we desire more? and consequently, in this respect, what could we add to the goodness which God has evinced to us? But that which gives us an idea still more striking, is the consideration of what it was necessary that God should do to communicate to us all these blessings. We should have indeed incurred for ever an infinite obligation, though all these benefits had cost him nothing, and though to confer them he should have done no more than at the creation of the world, when "*He spake the word, and it was made; He commanded and it stood fast.*" But it must be acknowledged, that the obligation which we should have incurred under this supposition, would have been scarcely of any value when compared with

what it is by a consideration of the means employed by him to convey to us all these advantages. He hath considered it necessary to give us his Son, his dear Son, "*the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person.*" He hath considered it necessary, too, that he should descend from heaven to earth. He hath considered it necessary that this august and holy person should unite himself with our miserable nature, with all its innocent infirmities and imperfections. He hath considered it necessary that this great Saviour should clothe himself with shame and reproach; that he should endure the most acute and lively pain; and in one word, that he should expire on the cross between two malefactors. See to what the love of God for us was capable to lead him. I inquire not now whether it is possible to add any thing to it; I ask only whether it would not require an extraordinary effort of faith to believe it? Still we see not all, while even we contemplate this.

The idea which we shall have of the goodness of God will be imperfect and defective if we do not add to it the unworthiness of the objects upon whom it is bestowed with so little apparent discrimination. For whom is it that God hath done all that I have just described? It is not for those faithful angels, who have kept without spot the

purity of their primitive innocence : it is not for those immortal spirits who for ever stand before his throne, and who are ever ready to execute the commands with which he will honor them. It is for men ; for vile, abject, miserable creatures ; and what deserves singular consideration, for ungrateful, rebellious, and criminal creatures, worthy of his hatred and of his vengeance, and fallen by their own fault into the abyss of final misery. It is upon these men, it is upon these vile creatures, it is upon these sinners that God has bestowed all the benefits of which I have spoken : it is for them that CHRIST hath come into the world, and hath suffered the cruel death of the cross. Can we imagine any thing that will compare with such a prodigy of love ? And what heart should we have if, in the consideration of all this, we are not transported with admiration ; if we do not adore a love like this ; or kindle into a flame of lively gratitude ? These reflections are powerful, but they are general ; and what is common and general affects us not by any means as much as that which is personal and particular. I would, therefore, desire that the dying should add to all these considerations which are drawn from what God does for all believers, without exception, reflections upon the particular favors which they have received from him ; upon the

care he has taken of them on various occasions ; upon the dangers from which he has preserved them ; upon the aids he has granted them ; upon the manner in which they have responded to them ; and upon other similar subjects, which it is impossible to notice more minutely, but which will readily occur to those who will undertake their due consideration.

Above all, we must not forget the favors which he grants, even at this moment, namely, the temporal and spiritual helps we enjoy, and which are denied to so many others, but chiefly the inestimable advantage of having the free use of reason, without which we would be deprived of the means of doing any thing for our salvation.

It is then desirable that believers, who are sensible of the approach of death, should apply their attention to all these things, and should consider what they would feel for a man in respect to whom they sustained, I will not say the same, obligations ; this is impossible : I will not say obligations approaching these ; even this is more than can be here said : but obligations a little greater than those which we generally sustain toward our greatest creditors. Would they not love him truly and sincerely ? and would they not esteem themselves happy to have the means and the opportunity of expressing the gratitude they

would feel? How, then, can they fail to have at least the same feelings in respect to God, who has done for them such "*marvellous things*?"

PRAYER.

Freely would I confess, O my God, that I am under infinite obligations to thee. In what point of view can I consider the favors thou hast granted me, without acknowledging that they infinitely exceed all that I could either expect or hope? and without finding in the love which has led thee to shed them upon me with such profusion, a subject of admiration and of astonishment which confounds all my thoughts? Freely would I confess that I owe thee an eternal gratitude, and that amid all that I can do in the acknowledgment of it, there is nothing I have a right to refuse thee. I acknowledge, in particular, that the love which I owe thee, and to which such goodness engages me, should occupy all the capacities of my heart, and should prevent me from ever thinking but of this one object, and acting only by this one principle. Yet, LORD, I acknowledge with confusion that this love is far from what it ought to be. It is feeble and languid. It is not even so great as I have often felt for created objects, which are utterly unworthy to be compared with thee. I

have indispensable need, therefore, of thy indulgence, and it will require a great extension of this not to punish me for a fault so inexcusable and so criminal. But, LORD, after all that thou hast done for me, have I not some ground to promise myself this indulgence; and may I not hope that thou wilt not refuse to grant my humble petition? I beseech thee so to do, O my God, in the name and by the merit of thy dear Son. Yet at the same time I pray thee to grant me thy help for the correction of so shameful an imperfection. Thy spirit, LORD, is a spirit of love and of grace; a fire which can kindle the coldest hearts, and fill them with ardor and with zeal.

Grant me this grace, most loving Father. Grant me not only to love thee, but to love thee powerfully, and with all my heart. This, of all thy favors, is that which now is most needful for me. Refuse it not to me, O my God; thou who hast so expressly promised thy Spirit, and consequently all his gifts to those who ask thee. I ask it of thee, O my God, in the name of thy Son, who not only died to procure me this great blessing, but who is ascended into heaven to intercede with thee for all thy children, and give prevalence to all their prayers.

CHAPTER XV.

THAT THE DYING SHOULD THINK EARNESTLY OF CHRIST
CRUCIFIED.

THERE is, perhaps, nothing in which the dying can engage themselves either more usefully or more holily, than in thinking upon CHRIST crucified. This, according to St. Peter, is the engaging subject which occupies the consideration of the angelic host. How, then, can men dispense with a deep concern for it? Especially should they apply themselves to it when death draws nigh. By this means are they to enjoy that frame of mind, and perform those holy acts which are needful on this occasion. First, they should so place before them the great model, as that they should seek to imitate it. The Christian should aspire only to the glory of being conformed to his Redeemer. He should endeavor to resemble him in every thing if he could, but particularly in his death.

Which of the parts or duties of piety can be useful on this occasion, which we may not remark in the manner of our Saviour's conduct during his bitter passion? Does it require much pene-

tration, does it require much research to perceive the evidences of his trust, of his resignation, of his love for God, of his charity for men, of his meekness and of his patience, of his humility, and of all the other virtues which a dying person should put in practice in order that he may enjoy a holy and a happy death? Not that I conceive it possible to equal that admirable model; it is too exalted, and we are too feeble, and filled with too many faults and imperfections to believe that it could be possible to succeed in such a design. I am satisfied, therefore, if he only endeavor to approach it as nearly as human frailty and infirmity will admit. I desire he may follow it, though it be only at a distance. But this is not the only use that we can derive from such a reflection. If we apply ourselves to its consideration a little more earnestly, it will inspire us with all those feelings which are requisite on this occasion, there not being one to which this great object does not effectually lead us, and of which it does not offer us motives the most powerful and persuasive.

Ought we not, for instance, to detest sin, when we consider how it displeases God, and how it must appear in his view of it, since he has punished it so severely in the person of his dear Son, who was loaded with it by imputation in order that he might bear its penalty? If it has drawn down

upon this innocent and just person a treatment so rigorous, to what would it subject those who commit it, and make it their delight?

Do we not feel a very lively grief on account of those excesses to which we may have been led when we come to consider those exquisite sufferings to which they subjected this great Redeemer? The amazing evidence that both the eternal Father and his adorable Son have given us of their love, — the one in exposing his dear Son unto death for our salvation; the other in himself submitting to it freely; can this present itself to our mind, however transiently, without exciting in the heart all the emotions of a lively and profound gratitude? How can we find it in ourselves to refuse any thing to a God so liberal and beneficent; to a Redeemer so merciful and so charitable? Shall we not love, yes, love powerfully, effectually and sincerely, a God who loves us in a manner so incomprehensible? Shall we not say with his Apostle, "*The love of CHRIST constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again.*" (2 Cor. v. 14, 15.) Shall we not stifle all the injurious fears with which we can be agitated when we consider the reasons

which JESUS CHRIST thus dying for us places before our view to promise us every thing on God's behalf? Why should we fear to perish, seeing that God employs a means so efficacious for our salvation? Why should we apprehend our sins, knowing that JESUS CHRIST has blotted them out by a satisfaction so perfect and so complete? Why should we apprehend the wrath of God, while we are not ignorant in what manner it hath been appeased by the sacrifice which his dear Son hath presented to him? Why should we fear the powers of darkness? He who makes us so clearly to perceive that he is for us, is he not incomparably more powerful than all those who are against us? What can we fear to want after JESUS CHRIST hath given himself to death for us? What shall the eternal Father refuse those to whom he hath given his Son? And what can the Son withhold from those for whom he hath not spared his blood and his life?

As it regards patience, I cannot comprehend how we can be wanting in this, if we recollect that JESUS CHRIST hath suffered the death of the cross. He subjected himself to that fearful punishment with the sole design of our redemption. Can it be that we would not suffer any thing for his glory? Could we be so unjust, could we be so weak as to take it ill that he should call us to

bear a little part of his cross, while he is loaded with all of ours, which was so heavy?

I make the same remark of resignation to the will of God. If this will were that of a severe and inflexible judge, it would be doubtless very just that we should submit to it; but it would be also something very difficult. But since it is the will of an infinitely tender Father, as he appears by all that JESUS CHRIST hath endured for us, how can we feel any difficulty in subjecting ourselves to him absolutely and unreservedly? What! will we not allow ourselves to be conducted by him who loves us so tenderly, and who takes such care of our interests? Can we be capable of a caprice like this, and without feeling the most grievous self-reproach?

In regard to humility, can it be unfelt by those who consider the deep abasement of JESUS CHRIST crucified? He made himself of no reputation, says his Apostle to us. He hath descended to the lowest abyss of humiliation. He was "*a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.*" Would it be, after this, tolerable that miserable worms of the dust should bethink themselves of pride or superiority? Nothing, then, is more useful and more salutary than this reflection.

Thus it concerns us to bring it home to our minds as often as we can, as well during life as also chiefly at death. We should seek, that we may be able to say with the Apostle, "*I am crucified with CHRIST, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but CHRIST liveth in me; and the life that I live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*"

PRAYER.

What would be my blindness, O merciful Redeemer of men, if I should question that infinite love with which it hath pleased thee to honor me, all unworthy as I am. Hast thou not descended from heaven to earth to seek me in the midst of my wanderings and of my disorders? Hast thou not united my nature to thine own? Hast thou not taken all my infirmities that thou mightst deliver me from them? Hast thou not shed thy blood, thy precious blood, to redeem me? Having given me such distinguishing proofs of thy love, wilt thou refuse me what is necessary for me on this occasion, and what will cost thee incomparably less than all which thou hast already granted me? Wilt thou refuse me thy charitable cares? Wilt thou refuse me the graces of thy Holy Spirit? No, my Redeemer, I fear it not: I have incontestible grounds for expecting it. I

have all that thou hast already done for me. I have all the merit of thy blood. I have thy love, thy faithfulness, thine immutability and thy constancy. I have even thy holy word, sealed and confirmed by thy sacraments. It is true that my sins oppose themselves: but besides that thou hast obliterated them all, expiated them all by thy death, would it be possible that they could have more power to destroy me than thy love, than thy blood have to save me? And besides, have these sins prevented thee from dying for me? Why, then, should they hinder thee from giving me thy help and thy favorable support? Refuse me not, merciful Redeemer of men: perfect thy good work in me. Thou hast commenced it by thy grace: thou hast hitherto furthered it: be pleased to accomplish, and add to it whatever is deficient. Sustain me in this final and important combat: grant me thy grace to have victory, and to triumph eternally with thee. My soul is now no longer my own; it is absolutely thine. Since, after having created it, thou hast redeemed it, and thou hast acquired it at the price of thy blood, to thee I commend it, O merciful Saviour, and I resign it to thy care and to thy love, fully persuaded that its happiness is a thousand times more assured depending on thee, than if it depended on myself.

THE DYING CHRISTIAN.

THE hour of my departure 's come ;
I hear the voice that calls me home ;
At last, O LORD ! let trouble cease,
And let thy servant die in peace.

The race appointed I have run ;
The combat 's o'er, the prize is won ;
And now my witness is on high,
And now my record 's in the sky.

Not in mine innocence I trust ;
I bow before thee in the dust ;
And through my Saviour's blood alone
I look for mercy at thy throne.

I leave the world without a tear,
Save for the friends I held so dear ;
To heal their sorrows, LORD, descend,
And to the friendless prove a friend.

I come, I come at thy command,
I give my spirit to thy hand ;
Stretch forth thine everlasting arms,
And shield me in the last alarms.

The hour of my departure 's come ;
I hear the voice that calls me home ;
Now, O my God ! let trouble cease,
Now let thy servant die in peace.

LOGAN.

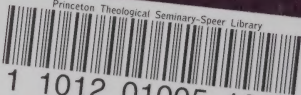
ERRATA.

Page 6,—5th line from bottom, "hearers" should be "readers."

Page 283,—Title of the chapter, "WE" should be "HE."



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